







LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER



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LATE LYRICS  
AND EARLIER

WITH MANY OTHER VERSES

BY  
THOMAS HARDY

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## APOLOGY

**A**BOUT half the verses that follow were written quite lately. The rest are older, having been held over in MS. when past volumes were published, on considering that these would contain a sufficient number of pages to offer readers at one time, more especially during the distractions of the war. The unusually far back poems to be found here are, however, but some that were overlooked in gathering previous collections. A freshness in them, now unattainable, seemed to make up for their inexperience and to justify their inclusion. A few are dated; the dates of others are not discoverable.

The launching of a volume of this kind in neo-Georgian days by one who began writing in mid-Victorian, and has published nothing to speak of for some years, may seem to call for a few words of excuse or

explanation. Whether or no, readers may feel assured that a new book is submitted to them with great hesitation at so belated a date. Insistent practical reasons, however, among which were requests from some illustrious men of letters who are in sympathy with my productions, the accident that several of the poems have already seen the light, and that dozens of them have been lying about for years, compelled the course adopted, in spite of the natural disinclination of a writer whose works have been so frequently regarded askance by a pragmatic section here and there, to draw attention to them once more.

I do not know that it is necessary to say much on the contents of the book, even in deference to suggestions that will be mentioned presently. I believe that those readers who care for my poems at all—readers to whom no passport is required—will care for this new instalment of them, perhaps the last, as much as for any that have preceded them. Moreover, in the eyes of a less friendly class the pieces, though a very mixed collection indeed, contain, so far as I am able to see, little or nothing in technic or teaching that can be considered a Star-Chamber matter, or so much as agitating to a ladies'

school; even though, to use Wordsworth's observation in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, such readers may suppose "that by the act of writing in verse an author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association: that he not only thus apprises the reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded."

It is true, nevertheless, that some grave, positive, stark, delineations are interspersed among those of the passive, lighter, and traditional sort presumably nearer to stereotyped tastes. For—while I am quite aware that a thinker is not expected, and, indeed, is scarcely allowed, now more than heretofore, to state all that crosses his mind concerning existence in this universe, in his attempts to explain or excuse the presence of evil and the incongruity of penalizing the irresponsible—it must be obvious to open intelligences that, without denying the beauty and faithful service of certain venerable cults, such disallowance of "obstinate questionings" and "blank misgivings" tends to a paralysed intellectual stalemate. Heine observed nearly a hundred years ago that the soul has her eternal rights; that she will not be darkened

by statutes, nor lullabied by the music of bells. And what is to-day, in allusions to the present author's pages, alleged to be "pessimism" is, in truth, only such "questionings" in the exploration of reality, and is the first step towards the soul's betterment, and the body's also.

If I may be forgiven for quoting my own old words, let me repeat what I printed in this relation more than twenty years ago, and wrote much earlier, in a poem entitled "In Tenebris":

If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst:

that is to say, by the exploration of reality, and its frank recognition stage by stage along the survey, with an eye to the best consummation possible: briefly, evolutionary meliorism. But it is called pessimism nevertheless; under which word, expressed with condemnatory emphasis, it is regarded by many as some pernicious new thing (though so old as to underlie the Christian idea, and even to permeate the Greek drama); and the subject is charitably left to decent silence, as if further comment were needless.

Happily there are some who feel such Levitical passing-by to be, alas, by no

means a permanent dismissal of the matter ; that comment on where the world stands is very much the reverse of needless in these disordered years of our prematurely afflicted century : that amendment and not madness lies that way. And looking down the future these few hold fast to the same : that whether the human and kindred animal races survive till the exhaustion or destruction of the globe, or whether these races perish and are succeeded by others before that conclusion comes, pain to all upon it, tongued or dumb, shall be kept down to a minimum by lovingkindness, operating through scientific knowledge, and actuated by the modicum of free will conjecturally possessed by organic life when the mighty necessitating forces—unconscious or other—that have “the balancings of the clouds,” happen to be in equilibrium, which may or may not be often.

To conclude this question I may add that the argument of the so-called optimists is neatly summarized in a stern pronouncement against me by my friend Mr. Frederic Harrison in a late essay of his, in the words : “This view of life is not mine.” The solemn declaration does not seem to me to be so annihilating to

the said "view" (really a series of fugitive impressions which I have never tried to co-ordinate) as is complacently assumed. Surely it embodies a too human fallacy quite familiar in logic. Next, a knowing reviewer, apparently a Roman Catholic young man, speaks, with some rather gross instances of the *suggestio falsi* in his article, of "Mr. Hardy refusing consolation," the "dark gravity of his ideas," and so on. When a Positivist and a Catholic agree there must be something wonderful in it, which should make a poet sit up. But . . . O that 'twere possible!

I would not have alluded in this place or anywhere else to such casual personal criticisms—for casual and unreflecting they must be—but for the satisfaction of two or three friends in whose opinion a short answer was deemed desirable, on account of the continual repetition of these criticisms, or more precisely, quizzings. After all, the serious and truly literary inquiry in this connection is: Should a shaper of such stuff as dreams are made on disregard considerations of what is customary and expected, and apply himself to the real function of poetry, the application of ideas to life (in Matthew Arnold's familiar phrase)?

This bears more particularly on what has been called the “philosophy” of these poems—usually reproved as “queer.” Whoever the author may be that undertakes such application of ideas in this “philosophic” direction—where it is specially required—glacial judgments must inevitably fall upon him amid opinion whose arbiters largely decry individuality, to whom *ideas* are oddities to smile at, who are moved by a yearning the reverse of that of the Athenian inquirers on Mars Hill; and stiffen their features not only at sound of a new thing, but at a restatement of old things in new terms. Hence should anything of this sort in the following adumbrations seem “queer”—should any of them seem to good Panglossians to embody strange and disrespectful conceptions of this best of all possible worlds, I apologize; but cannot help it.

Such divergences, which, though piquant for the nonce, it would be affectation to say are not saddening and discouraging likewise, may, to be sure, arise sometimes from superficial aspect only, writer and reader seeing the same thing at different angles. But in palpable cases of divergence they arise, as already said,

whenever a serious effort is made towards that which the authority I have cited—who would now be called old-fashioned, possibly even parochial—affirmed to be what no good critic could deny as the poet's province, the application of ideas to life. One might shrewdly guess, by the by, that in such recommendation the famous writer may have overlooked the cold-shouldering results upon an enthusiastic disciple that would be pretty certain to follow his putting the high aim in practice, and have forgotten the disconcerting experience of Gil Blas with the Archbishop.

To add a few more words to what has already taken up too many, there is a contingency liable to miscellanies of verse that I have never seen mentioned, so far as I can remember; I mean the chance little shocks that may be caused over a book of various character like the present and its predecessors by the juxtaposition of unrelated, even discordant, effusions; poems perhaps years apart in the making, yet facing each other. An odd result of this has been that dramatic anecdotes of a satirical and humorous intention (such, *e.g.*, as "Royal Sponsors") following verse in graver voice, have been read as misfires

because they raise the smile that they were intended to raise, the journalist, deaf to the sudden change of key, being unconscious that he is laughing with the author and not at him. I admit that I did not foresee such contingencies as I ought to have done, and that people might not perceive when the tone altered. But the difficulties of arranging the themes in a graduated kinship of moods would have been so great that irrelation was almost unavoidable with efforts so diverse. I must trust for right note-catching to those finely-touched spirits who can divine without half a whisper, whose intuitiveness is proof against all the accidents of inconsequence. In respect of the less alert, however, should any one's train of thought be thrown out of gear by a consecutive piping of vocal reeds in jarring tonics, without a semiquaver's rest between, and be led thereby to miss the writer's aim and meaning in one out of two contiguous compositions, I shall deeply regret it.

Having at last, I think, finished with the personal points that I was recommended to notice, I will forsake the immediate object of this Preface; and, leaving *Late Lyrics* to whatever fate it deserves,

digress for a few moments to more general considerations. The thoughts of any man of letters concerned to keep poetry alive cannot but run uncomfortably on the precarious prospects of English verse at the present day. Verily the hazards and casualties surrounding the birth and setting forth of almost every modern creation in numbers are ominously like those of one of Shelley's paper-boats on a windy lake. And a forward conjecture scarcely permits the hope of a better time, unless men's tendencies should change. So indeed of all art, literature, and "high thinking" nowadays. Whether owing to the barbarizing of taste in the younger minds by the dark madness of the late war, the unabashed cultivation of selfishness in all classes, the plethoric growth of knowledge simultaneously with the stunting of wisdom, "a degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation" (to quote Wordsworth again), or from any other cause, we seem threatened with a new Dark Age.

I formerly thought, like so many roughly handled writers, that so far as literature was concerned a partial cause might be impotent or mischievous criticism; the satirizing of individuality, the lack of whole-seeing in contemporary estimates

of poetry and kindred work, the knowingness affected by junior reviewers, the over-growth of meticulousness in their peerings for an opinion, as if it were a cultivated habit in them to scrutinize the tool-marks and be blind to the building, to hearken for the key-creaks and be deaf to the diapason, to judge the landscape by a nocturnal exploration with a flash-lantern. In other words, to carry on the old game of sampling the poem or drama by quoting the worst line or worst passage only, in ignorance or not of Coleridge's proof that a versification of any length neither can be nor ought to be all poetry ; of reading meanings into a book that its author never dreamt of writing there. I might go on interminably.

But I do not now think any such temporary obstructions to be the cause of the hazard, for these negligences and ignorances, though they may have stifled a few true poets in the run of generations, disperse like stricken leaves before the wind of next week, and are no more heard of again in the region of letters than their writers themselves. No : we may be convinced that something of the deeper sort mentioned must be the cause.

In any event poetry, pure literature in general, religion—I include religion because poetry and religion touch each other, or rather modulate into each other; are, indeed, often but different names for the same thing—these, I say, the visible signs of mental and emotional life, must like all other things keep moving, becoming; even though at present, when belief in witches of Endor is displacing the Darwinian theory and “the truth that shall make you free,” men’s minds appear, as above noted, to be moving backwards rather than on. I speak, of course, somewhat sweepingly, and should except many isolated minds; also the minds of men in certain worthy but small bodies of various denominations, and perhaps in the homely quarter where advance might have been the very least expected a few years back—the English Church—if one reads it rightly as showing evidence of “removing those things that are shaken,” in accordance with the wise Epistolary recommendation to the Hebrews. For since the historic and once august hierarchy of Rome some generation ago lost its chance of being the religion of the future by doing otherwise, and throwing over the little band of neo-Catholics who were making a struggle for continuity by

applying the principle of evolution to their own faith, joining hands with modern science, and outflanking the hesitating English instinct towards liturgical reform (a flank march which I at the time quite expected to witness, with the gathering of many millions of waiting agnostics into its fold); since then, one may ask, what other purely English establishment than the Church, of sufficient dignity and footing, and with such strength of old association, such architectural spell, is left in this country to keep the shreds of morality together?

It may be a forlorn hope, a mere dream, that of an alliance between religion, which must be retained unless the world is to perish, and complete rationality, which must come, unless also the world is to perish, by means of the interfusing effect of poetry—"the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; the impassioned expression of science," as it was defined by an English poet who was quite orthodox in his ideas. But if it be true, as Comte argued, that advance is never in a straight line, but in a looped orbit, we may, in the aforesaid ominous moving backward, be doing it *pour mieux sauter*, drawing back for a spring.

I repeat that I forlornly hope so, notwithstanding the supercilious regard of hope by Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and other philosophers down to Einstein who have my respect. But one dares not prophesy. Physical, chronological, and other contingencies keep me in these days from critical studies and literary circles

Where once we held debate, a band  
Of youthful friends, on mind and art

(if one may quote Tennyson in this century of free verse). Hence I cannot know how things are going so well as I used to know them, and the aforesaid limitations must quite prevent my knowing henceforward.

I have to thank the editors and owners of *The Times*, *Fortnightly*, *Mercury*, and other periodicals in which a few of the poems have appeared for kindly assenting to their being reclaimed for collected publication.

T. H.

*February 1922.*

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## WEATHERS

### I

THIS is the weather the cuckoo likes,  
And so do I ;  
When showers betumble the chestnut  
spikes,  
And nestlings fly :  
And the little brown nightingale bills his  
best,  
And they sit outside at “ The Travellers’  
Rest,”  
And maids come forth sprig-muslin drest,  
And citizens dream of the south and west,  
And so do I.

### II

This is the weather the shepherd shuns,  
And so do I ;  
When beeches drip in browns and duns,  
And thresh, and ply ; •

## WEATHERS

And hill-hid tides throb, throe on throe,  
And meadow rivulets overflow,  
And drops on gate-bars hang in a row,  
And rooks in families homeward go,  
And so do I.

## THE MAID OF KEINTON MANDEVILLE

(A TRIBUTE TO SIR H. BISHOP)

I HEAR that maiden still  
Of Keinton Mandeville  
Singing, in flights that played  
As wind-wafts through us all,  
Till they made our mood a thrall  
To their airy rise and fall,  
“Should he upbraid.”

Rose-necked, in sky-gray gown,  
From a stage in Stower Town  
Did she sing, and singing smile  
As she blent that dexterous voice  
With the ditty of her choice,  
And banished our annoys  
Thereawhile.

## THE MAID

One with such song had power  
To wing the heaviest hour  
Of him who housed with her.  
Who did I never knew  
When her spoused estate ondrew,  
And her warble flung its woo  
In his ear.

Ah, she's a beldame now,  
Time-trenched on cheek and brow,  
Whom I once heard as a maid  
From Keinton Mandeville  
Of matchless scope and skill  
Sing, with smile and swell and trill,  
"Should he upbraid!"

1915 or 1916.

## SUMMER SCHEMES

WHEN friendly summer calls again,  
Calls again  
Her little fifers to these hills,  
We'll go—we two—to that arched fane  
Of leafage where they prime their bills  
Before they start to flood the plain  
With quavers, minims, shakes, and trills.  
“—We'll go,” I sing ; but who shall  
say  
What may not chance before that day !

And we shall see the waters spring,  
Waters spring  
From chinks the scrubby copses crown ;  
And we shall trace their oncreeping  
To where the cascade tumbles down  
And sends the bobbing growths aswing,  
And ferns not quite but almost drown.  
“—We shall,” I say ; but who may  
sing  
Of what another moon will bring !

## EPEISODIA

PAST the hills that peep  
Where the leaze is smiling,  
On and on beguiling  
Crisply-cropping sheep ;  
Under boughs of brushwood  
Linking tree and tree  
In a shade of lushwood,  
There caressed we !

### II

Hemmed by city walls  
That outshut the sunlight,  
In a foggy dun light,  
Where the footstep falls  
With a pit-pat wearisome  
In its cadency  
On the flagstones drearisome  
There pressed we !

## III

Where in wild-winged crowds  
Blown birds show their whiteness  
Up against the lightness  
Of the clammy clouds ;  
By the random river  
Pushing to the sea,  
Under bents that quiver  
There rest we.

## FAINTHEART IN A RAILWAY TRAIN

AT nine in the morning there passed a  
church,  
At ten there passed me by the sea,  
At twelve a town of smoke and smirch,  
At two a forest of oak and birch,  
And then, on a platform, she :

A radiant stranger, who saw not me.  
I queried, "Get out to her do I dare?"  
But I kept my seat in my search for a plea,  
And the wheels moved on. O could it  
but be  
That I had alighted there!

## AT MOONRISE AND ONWARDS

I THOUGHT you a fire  
On Heron-Plantation Hill,  
Dealing out mischief the most dire  
To the chattels of men of hire  
There in their vill.

But by and by  
You turned a yellow-green,  
Like a large glow-worm in the sky ;  
And then I could descry  
Your mood and mien.

How well I know  
Your furtive feminine shape !  
As if reluctantly you show  
You nude of cloud, and but by favour  
throw  
Aside its drape. . . . •

## 10 MOONRISE AND ONWARDS

—How many a year  
Have you kept pace with me,  
Wan Woman of the waste up there,  
Behind a hedge, or the bare  
Bough of a tree !

No novelty are you,  
O Lady of all my time,  
Veering unbid into my view  
Whether I near Death's mew,  
Or Life's top cyme !

## THE GARDEN SEAT

ITS former green is blue and thin,  
And its once firm legs sink in and in;  
Soon it will break down unaware,  
Soon it will break down unaware.

At night when reddest flowers are black  
Those who once sat thereon come back ;  
Quite a row of them sitting there,  
Quite a row of them sitting there.

With them the seat does not break down,  
Nor winter freeze them, nor floods drown,  
For they are as light as upper air,  
They are as light as upper air !

## BARTHÉLÉMON AT VAUXHALL

François Hippolite Barthélémon, first-fiddler at Vauxhall Gardens, composed what was probably the most popular morning hymn-tune ever written. It was formerly sung, full-voiced, every Sunday in most churches, to Bishop Ken's words, but is now seldom heard.

HE said: "Awake my soul, and with  
the sun," . . .  
And paused upon the bridge, his eyes due  
east,  
Where was emerging like a full-robed  
priest  
The irradiate globe that vouch'd the dark  
as done.

It lit his face—the weary face of one  
Who in the adjacent gardens charged his  
string,  
Nightly, with many a tuneful tender thing,  
Till stars were weak, and dancing hours  
outrun.

And then were threads of matin music  
spun  
In trial tones as he pursued his way :  
“This is a morn,” he murmured, “well  
begun :  
This strain to Ken will count when I am  
clay !”

And count it did ; till, caught by echoing  
lyres,  
It spread to galleried naves and mighty  
quires.

## “I SOMETIMES THINK”

(FOR F. E. H.)

I SOMETIMES think as here I sit  
    Of things I have done,  
Which seemed in doing not unfit  
    To face the sun :  
Yet never a soul has paused a whit  
    On such—not one.

There was that eager strenuous press  
    To sow good seed ;  
There was that saving from distress  
    In the nick of need ;  
There were those words in the wilderness :  
    Who cared to heed ?

Yet can this be full true, or no ?  
    For one did care,  
And, spiriting into my house, to, fro,  
    Like wind on the stair,  
Cares still, heeds all, and will, even though  
    I may despair.

## JEZREEL

ON ITS SEIZURE BY THE ENGLISH UNDER-  
ALLENBY, SEPTEMBER 1918

DID they catch as it were in a Vision  
at shut of the day—  
When their cavalry smote through the  
ancient Esdraelon Plain,  
And they crossed where the Tishbite stood  
forth in his enemy's way—  
His gaunt mournful Shade as he bade the  
King haste off amain?

On war-men at this end of time—even on  
Englishmen's eyes—  
Who slay with their arms of new might in  
that long-ago place,  
Flashed he who drove furiously? . . . Ah,  
did the phantom arise  
Of that queen, of that proud Tyrian woman  
who painted her face?

Faintly marked they the words "Throw  
her down!" rise from Night eerily,  
Spectre-spots of the blood of her body on  
some rotten wall?

And the thin note of pity that came: "A  
King's daughter is she,"  
As they passed where she trodden was  
once by the chargers' footfall?

Could such be the hauntings of men of to-  
day, at the cease

Of pursuit, at the dusk-hour, ere slumber  
their senses could seal?

Enghosted seers, kings—one on horseback  
who asked "Is it peace?" . . .

Yea, strange things and spectral may men  
have beheld in Jezreel!

*September 24, 1918.*

## A JOG-TROT PAIR

WHO were the twain that trod this  
track  
So many times together  
Hither and back,  
In spells of certain and uncertain weather ?

Commonplace in conduct they  
Who wandered to and fro here  
Day by day :  
Two that few dwellers troubled themselves  
to know here.

The very gravel-path was prim  
That daily they would follow :  
Borders trim :  
Never a wayward sprout, or hump, or  
hollow.

Trite usages in tamest style  
Had tended to their plighting.  
“It’s just worth while,  
Perhaps,” they had said. “And saves  
much sad good-nighting.”

And petty seemed the happenings  
That ministered to their joyance :  
Simple things,  
Onerous to satiate souls, increased their  
buoyance.

Who could those common people be,  
Of days the plainest, barest ?  
They were we ;  
Yes ; happier than the cleverest, smartest,  
rarest.

## “THE CURTAINS NOW ARE DRAWN”

(SONG)

### I

THE curtains now are drawn,  
And the spindrift strikes the  
glass,  
Blown up the jagged pass  
By the surly salt sou'-west,  
And the sneering glare is gone  
Behind the yonder crest,  
While she sings to me :  
“O the dream that thou art my Love, be  
it thine,  
And the dream that I am thy Love, be it  
mine,  
And death may come, but loving is divine.”

## II

I stand here in the rain,  
With its smite upon her stone,  
And the grasses that have grown  
Over women, children, men,  
And their texts that "Life is vain";  
But I hear the notes as when  
Once she sang to me:  
"O the dream that thou art my Love, be  
it thine,  
And the dream that I am thy Love, be it  
mine,  
And death may come, but loving is divine."

1913.

## “ACCORDING TO THE MIGHTY WORKING”

### I

WHEN moiling seems at cease  
In the vague void of night-time,  
And heaven's wide roomage stormless  
Between the dusk and light-time,  
And fear at last is formless,  
We call the allurement Peace.

### II

Peace, this hid riot, Change,  
This revel of quick-cued mumming,  
This never truly being,  
This evermore becoming,  
This spinner's wheel onfleeing  
Outside perception's range.

1917.

## “I WAS NOT HE”

(SONG)

I WAS not he—the man  
Who used to pilgrim to your gate,  
At whose smart step you grew elate,  
And rosed, as maidens can,  
For a brief span.

It was not I who sang  
Beside the keys you touched so true  
With note-bent eyes, as if with you  
It counted not whence sprang  
The voice that rang. . . .

Yet though my destiny  
It was to miss your early sweet,  
You still, when turned to you my feet,  
Had sweet enough to be  
A prize for me!

## THE WEST-OF-WESSEX GIRL

A VERY West-of-Wessex girl,  
As blithe as blithe could be,  
Was once well-known to me,  
And she would laud her native town,  
And hope and hope that we  
Might sometime study up and down  
Its charms in company.

But never I squired my Wessex girl  
In jaunts to Hoe or street  
When hearts were high in beat,  
Nor saw her in the marbled ways  
Where market-people meet  
That in her bounding early days  
Were friendly with her feet.

Yet now my West-of-Wessex girl,  
When midnight hammers slow  
From Andrew's, blow by blow,

24 WEST-OF-WESSEX GIRL

As phantom draws me by the hand  
To the place—Plymouth Hoe—  
Where side by side in life, as planned,  
We never were to go!

Begun in Plymouth, *March 1913.*

## WELCOME HOME

TO my native place  
Bent upon returning,  
Bosom all day burning  
To be where my race  
Well were known, 'twas much with me  
There to dwell in amity.

Folk had sought their beds,  
But I hailed : to view me  
Under the moon, out to me  
Several pushed their heads,  
And to each I told my name,  
Plans, and that therefrom I came.

“ Did you? . . . Ah, 'tis true  
I once heard, back a long time,  
Here had spent his young time,  
Some such man as you . . .  
Good-night.” The casement closed  
again,  
And I was left in the frosty lane.

## GOING AND STAYING

THE moving sun-shapes on the spray,  
The sparkles where the brook was  
flowing,  
Pink faces, plightings, moonlit May,  
These were the things we wished would  
stay ;  
But they were going.

### II

Seasons of blankness as of snow,  
The silent bleed of a world decaying,  
The moan of multitudes in woe,  
These were the things we wished would  
go ;  
But they were staying.

### III

Then we looked closer at Time,  
And saw his ghostly arms revolving  
To sweep off woeful things with prime,  
Things sinister with things sublime  
Alike dissolving.

## READ BY MOONLIGHT

I PAUSED to read a letter of hers  
By the moon's cold shine,  
Eyeing it in the tenderest way,  
And edging it up to catch each ray  
Upon her light-penned line.  
I did not know what years would flow  
Of her life's span and mine  
Ere I read another letter of hers  
By the moon's cold shine !

I chance now on the last of hers,  
By the moon's cold shine ;  
It is the one remaining page  
Out of the many shallow and sage  
Whereto she set her sign.  
Who could foresee there were to be  
Such letters of pain and pine  
Ere I should read this last of hers  
By the moon's cold shine !

## AT A HOUSE IN HAMPSTEAD

SOMETIMES THE DWELLING OF JOHN KEATS

O POET, come you haunting here  
Where streets have stolen up all  
around,  
And never a nightingale pours one  
Full-throated sound?

Drawn from your drowse by the Seven  
famed Hills,  
Thought you to find all just the same  
Here shining, as in hours of old,  
If you but came?

What will you do in your surprise  
At seeing that changes wrought in Rome  
Are wrought yet more on the misty slope  
One time your home?

## AT A HOUSE IN HAMPSTEAD 29

Will you wake wind-wafts on these stairs?  
Swing the doors open noisily?  
Show as an umbraged ghost beside  
Your ancient tree?

Or will you, softening, the while  
You further and yet further look,  
Learn that a laggard few would fain,  
Preserve your nook? . . .

—Where the Piazza steps incline,  
And catch late light at eventide,  
I once stood, in that Rome, and thought,  
“ ‘Twas here he died.”

I drew to a violet-sprinkled spot,  
Where day and night a pyramid keeps  
Uplifted its white hand, and said,  
“ ‘Tis there he sleeps.”

Pleasanter now it is to hold  
That here, where sang he, more of him  
Remains than where he, tuneless, cold,  
Passed to the dim.

## A WOMAN'S FANCY

"**A**H, Madam; you've indeed come back here?"

"Twas sad—your husband's so swift death,  
And you away! You shouldn't have left him:  
It hastened his last breath."

"Dame, I am not the lady you think me;  
I know not her, nor know her name;  
I've come to lodge here—a friendless woman;  
My health my only aim."

She came; she lodged. Wherever she rambled  
They held her as no other than  
The lady named; and told how her husband  
• Had died a forsaken man.

So often did they call her thuswise  
Mistakenly, by that man's name,  
So much did they declare about him,  
That his past form and fame

Grew on her, till she pitied his sorrow  
As if she truly had been the cause—  
Yea, his deserter; and came to wonder  
What mould of man he was.

“Tell me my history!” would exclaim she;  
“*Our* history,” she said mournfully.  
“But *you* know, surely, Ma'am?” they  
would answer,  
Much in perplexity.

Curious, she crept to his grave one evening,  
And a second time in the dusk of the  
morrow;  
Then a third time, with crescent emotion  
Like a bereaved wife's sorrow.

No gravestone rose by the rounded hillock;  
—“I marvel why this is?” she said.  
—“He had no kindred, Ma'am, but you  
near.”  
—She set a stone at his head.

She learnt to dream of him, and told them :  
    " In slumber often uprises he,  
And says : ' I am joyed that, after all,  
    Dear,  
        You've not deserted me ! ' "

At length died too this kinless woman,  
    As he had died she had grown to crave ;  
And at her dying she besought them  
    To bury her in his grave.

Such said, she had paused; until she added :  
    " Call me by his name on the stone,  
As I were, first to last, his dearest,  
    Not she who left him lone ! "

And this they did. And so it became there  
    That, by the strength of a tender whim,  
The stranger was she who bore his name  
    there,  
        Not she who wedded him.

## HER SONG

I SANG that song on Sunday,  
To witch an idle while,  
I sang that song on Monday,  
As fittest to beguile ;  
I sang it as the year outwore,  
And the new slid in ;  
I thought not what might shape before  
Another would begin.

I sang that song in summer,  
All unforeknowingly,  
To him as a new-comer  
From regions strange to me :  
I sang it when in afteryears  
The shades stretched out,  
And paths were faint ; and flocking fears  
Brought cup-eyed care and doubt.

## HER SONG

Sings he that song on Sundays  
In some dim land afar,  
On Saturdays, or Mondays,  
As when the evening star  
Glimpsed in upon his bending face  
And my hanging hair,  
And time untouched me with a trace  
Of soul-smart or despair?

## A WET AUGUST

NINE drops of water bead the jessamine,  
And nine-and-ninety smear the stones and tiles :  
—'Twas not so in that August—full-rayed, fine—  
When we lived out-of-doors, sang songs, strode miles.

Or was there then no noted radiancy  
Of summer ? Were dun clouds, a dribbling bough,  
Gilt over by the light I bore in me,  
And was the waste world just the same as now ?

It can have been so : yea, that threatenings  
Of coming down-drip on the sunless gray,  
By the then possibilities in things  
Were wrought more bright than brightest skies to-day.

## THE DISSEMBLERS

“ **I**T was not you I came to please,  
Only myself,” flipped she ;  
“ I like this spot of phantasies,  
And thought you far from me.”  
But O, he was the secret spell  
That led her to the lea !

“ It was not she who shaped my ways,  
Or works, or thoughts,” he said.  
“ I scarcely marked her living days,  
Or missed her much when dead.”  
But O, his joyance knew its knell  
When daisies hid her head !

## TO A LADY PLAYING AND SINGING IN THE MORNING

JOYFUL lady, sing!  
And I will lurk here listening,  
Though nought be done, and nought begun,  
And work-hours swift are scurrying.

Sing, O lady, still !  
Aye, I will wait each note you trill,  
Though duties due that press to do  
This whole day long I unfulfil.

“—It is an evening tune ;  
One not designed to waste the noon,”  
You say. I know : time bids me go—  
For daytime passes too, too soon !

But let indulgence be,  
This once, to my rash ecstasy :  
When sounds nowhere that carolled air  
My idled morn may comfort me ! ,

## “A MAN WAS DRAWING NEAR TO ME”

ON that gray night of mournful drone,  
A part from aught to hear, to see,  
I dreamt not that from shires unknown  
    In gloom, alone,  
    By Halworthy,  
A man was drawing near to me.

I'd no concern at anything,  
No sense of coming pull-heart play ;  
Yet, under the silent outspreading  
    Of even's wing  
    Where Otterham lay,  
A man was riding up my way.

I thought of nobody—not of one,  
But only of trifles—legends, ghosts—  
Though, on the moorland dim and dun  
    That travellers shun  
    About these coasts,  
The man had passed Tresparret Posts.

There was no light at all inland,  
Only the seaward pharos-fire,  
Nothing to let me understand  
    That hard at hand  
    By Hennett Byre

The man was getting nigh and nigher.

There was a rumble at the door,  
A draught disturbed the drapery, .  
And but a minute passed before,  
    With gaze that bore  
    My destiny,  
The man revealed himself to me.

## THE STRANGE HOUSE

(MAX GATE, A.D. 2000)

“ I HEAR the piano playing—  
Just as a ghost might play.”

“ —O, but what are you saying ?  
There's no piano to-day ;  
Their old one was sold and broken ;  
Years past it went amiss.”

“ —I heard it, or shouldn't have spoken :  
A strange house, this !

“ I catch some undertone here,  
From some one out of sight.”

“ —Impossible ; we are alone here,  
And shall be through the night.”

“ —The parlour-door—what stirred it ? ”  
“ —No one : no soul's in range.”

“ —But, anyhow, I heard it,  
And it seems strange !

“Seek my own room I cannot—  
A figure is on the stair!”  
“—What figure? Nay, I scan not  
Any one lingering there.  
A bough outside is waving,  
And that’s its shade by the moon.”  
“—Well, all is strange! I am craving  
Strength to leave soon.”

“—Ah, maybe you’ve some vision  
Of showings beyond our sphere;  
Some sight, sense, intuition  
Of what once happened here?  
The house is old; they’ve hinted  
It once held two love-thralls,  
And they may have imprinted  
Their dreams on its walls?

“They were—I think ‘twas told me—  
Queer in their works and ways;  
The teller would often hold me  
With weird tales of those days.  
Some folk can not abide here,  
But we—we do not care  
Who loved, laughed, wept, or died here,  
Knew joy, or despair.”

## “AS 'TWERE TO-NIGHT”

(SONG)

AS 'twere to-night, in the brief space  
    Of a far eventime,  
        My spirit rang achime  
At vision of a girl of grace ;  
AS 'twere to-night, in the brief space  
    Of a far eventime.

As 'twere at noontide of to-morrow  
    I airily walked and talked,  
        And wondered as I walked  
What it could mean, this soar from sorrow ;  
As 'twere at noontide of to-morrow  
    I airily walked and talked.

As 'twere at waning of this week  
    Broke a new life on me ;  
        Trancings of bliss to be  
In some dim dear land soon to seek ;  
As 'twere at waning of this week  
    Broke a new life on me !

## THE CONTEMPS

A FORWARD rush by the lamp in  
the gloom,

And we clasped, and almost kissed;  
But she was not the woman whom  
I had promised to meet in the thawing  
brume

On that harbour-bridge; nor was I he of  
her tryst.

- So loosening from me swift she said :  
    “ O why, why feign to be  
    The one I had meant!—to whom I have  
    sped  
    To fly with, being so sorriely wed! ”  
—'Twas thus and thus that she upbraided  
    me.

My assignation had struck upon  
    Some others' like it, I found.  
And her lover rose on the night anon ;  
    And then her husband entered on  
The lamplit, snowflaked, sloppiness a'round.

“Take her and welcome, man!” he  
cried :

“I wash my hands of her.  
I’ll find me twice as good a bride!”

—All this to me, whom he had eyed,  
Plainly, as his wife’s planned deliverer.

And next the lover : “Little I knew,  
Madam, you had a third!

Kissing here in my very view!”

—Husband and lover then withdrew.

I let them ; and I told them not they erred.

Why not? Well, there faced she and I—

Two strangers who’d kissed, or near,  
Chancewise. To see stand weeping by  
A woman once embraced, will try

The tension of a man the most austere.

So it began ; and I was young,

She pretty, by the lamp,

As flakes came waltzing down among

The waves of her clinging hair, that hung

Heavily on her temples, dark and damp.

And there alone still stood we two ;

She one cast off for me,

Or so it seemed : while night ondrew.

Forcing a parley what should do

We twain hearts caught in one catastrophe.

In stranded souls a common strait  
Wakes latencies unknown,  
Whose impulse may precipitate  
A life-long leap. The hour was late,  
And there was the Jersey boat with its  
funnel agroan.

“ Is wary walking worth much bother ? ”  
It grunted, as still it stayed. . .  
“ One pairing is as good as another  
Where all is venture ! Take each other,  
And scrap the oaths that you have afore-  
time made.” . . .

—Of the four involved there walks but  
one  
On earth at this late day.  
And what of the chapter so begun ?  
In that odd complex what was done ?  
Well ; happiness comes in full to none :  
Let peace lie on lulled lips : I will not say.

WEYMOUTH.

## A GENTLEMAN'S EPITAPH ON HIMSELF AND A LADY, WHO WERE BURIED TOGETHER

I DWELT in the shade of a city,  
She far by the sea,  
With folk perhaps good, gracious, witty ;  
But never with me.

Her form on the ballroom's smooth flooring  
I never once met,  
To guide her with accents adoring  
Through Weippert's "First Set."<sup>1</sup>

I spent my life's seasons with pale ones  
In Vanity Fair,  
And she enjoyed hers among hale ones  
In salt-smelling air.

<sup>1</sup> Quadrilles danced early in the nineteenth century.

## A GENTLEMAN'S EPITAPH 47.

Maybe she had eyes of deep colour,  
    Maybe they were blue,  
Maybe as she aged they got duller ;  
    That never I knew.

She may have had lips like the coral,  
    But I never kissed them,  
Saw pouting, nor curling in quarrel,  
    Nor sought for, nor missed them.

Not a word passed of love all our lifetime,  
    Between us, nor thrill ;  
We'd never a husband-and-wife time,  
    For good or for ill.

Yet as one dust, through bleak days and  
    vernal,  
Lie I and lies she,  
This never-known lady, eternal  
    Companion to me !

## THE OLD GOWN

(SONG)

I HAVE seen her in gowns the brightest,  
    Of azure, green, and red,  
And in the simplest, whitest,  
    Muslined from heel to head ;  
I have watched her walking, riding,  
    Shade-flecked by a leafy tree,  
Or in fixed thought abiding  
    By the foam-fingered sea.

In woodlands I have known her,  
    When boughs were mourning loud,  
In the rain-reek she has shown her  
    Wild-haired and watery-browed.  
And once or twice she has cast me  
    As she pomped along the street  
Court-clad, ere quite she had passed me,  
    A glance from her chariot-seat.

But in my memoried passion  
For evermore stands she  
In the gown of fading fashion  
She wore that night when we,  
Doomed long to part, assembled  
In the snug small room ; yea, when  
She sang with lips that trembled,  
“ Shall I see his face again ? ”

## A NIGHT IN NOVEMBER

I MARKED when the weather changed,  
And the panes began to quake,  
And the winds rose up and ranged,  
That night, lying half-awake.

Dead leaves blew into my room,  
And alighted upon my bed,  
And a tree declared to the gloom  
Its sorrow that they were shed.

One leaf of them touched my hand,  
And I thought that it was you  
There stood as you used to stand,  
And saying at last you knew !

(?) 1913.

A DUETTIST TO HER  
PIANOFORTE

SONG OF SILENCE

(E. L. H.—H. C. H.)

SINCE every sound moves memories,  
How can I play you  
Just as I might if you raised no scene,  
By your ivory rows, of a form between  
My vision and your time-worn sheen,  
As when each day you  
Answered our fingers with ecstasy ?  
So it's hushed, hushed, hushed, you are  
for me !

And as I am doomed to counterchord  
Her notes no more  
In those old things I used to know,  
In a fashion, when we practised so, •

“Good-night! — Good-bye!” to your  
 pleated show  
 Of silk, now hoar,  
 Each nodding hammer, and pedal and key,  
 For dead, dead, dead, you are to me!

I fain would second her, strike to her  
 stroke,  
 As when she was by,  
 Aye, even from the ancient clamorous  
 “Fall  
 Of Paris,” or “Battle of Prague” withal,  
 To the “Roving Minstrels,” or “Elfin  
 Call”  
 Sung soft as a sigh :  
 But upping ghosts press achefully,  
 And mute, mute, mute, you are for me!

Should I fling your polyphones, plaints,  
 and quavers  
 Afresh on the air,  
 Too quick would the small white shapes  
 be here  
 Of the fellow twain of hands so dear ;  
 And a black-tressed profile, and pale  
 smooth ear ;  
 — Then how shall I bear  
 Such heavily-haunted harmony ?  
 Nay : hushed, hushed, hushed you are  
 \* for me !

## “WHERE THREE ROADS JOINED”

WHERE three roads joined it was  
green and fair,  
And over a gate was the sun-glazed sea,  
And life laughed sweet when I halted there;  
Yet there I never again would be.

I am sure those branchways are brooding  
now,  
With a wistful blankness upon their face,  
While the few mute passengers notice how  
Spectre-beridden is the place;

Which nightly sighs like a laden soul,  
And grieves that a pair, in bliss for a spell  
Not far from thence, should have let it roll  
Away from them down a plumbless well

## 54 "WHERE ROADS JOINED"

While the phasm of him who fared starts  
up,  
And of her who was waiting him sobs  
from near,  
As they haunt there and drink the worm-  
wood cup  
They filled for themselves when their sky  
was clear.

Yes, I see those roads—now rutted and  
bare,  
While over the gate is no sun-glazed sea ;  
And though life laughed when I halted  
there,  
It is where I never again would be.

## “AND THERE WAS A GREAT CALM”

(ON THE SIGNING OF THE ARMISTICE,  
NOV. 11, 1918)

### I

THERE had been years of Passion--  
scorching, cold,  
And much Despair, and Anger heaving  
high,  
Care whitely watching, Sorrows manifold,  
Among the young, among the weak and  
old,  
And the pensive Spirit of Pity whispered,  
“Why?”

### II

Men had not paused to answer. Foes  
distraught  
Pierced the thinned peoples in a brute-like  
blindness,  
Philosophies that sages long had taught,

And Selflessness, were as an unknown thought,  
And "Hell!" and "Shell!" were yapped at Lovingkindness.

## III

The feeble folk at home had grown full-used  
To "dug-outs," "snipers," "Huns," from the war-adept  
In the mornings heard, and at evetides perused ;  
To day-dreamt men in millions, when they mused—  
To nightmare-men in millions when they slept.

## IV

Waking to wish existence timeless, null,  
Sirius they watched above where armies fell ;  
He seemed to check his flapping when, in the lull  
Of night a boom came thencewise, like the dull  
Plunge of a stone dropped into some deep well.

V

So, when old hopes that earth was bettering  
slowly  
Were dead and damned, there sounded  
"War is done!"  
One Morrow. Said the bereft, and meek,  
and lowly,  
"Will men some day be given to grace?  
yea, wholly,  
And in good sooth, as our dreams used  
to run?"

VI

Breathless they paused. Out there men  
raised their glance  
To where had stood those poplars lank  
and lopped,  
As they had raised it through the four  
years' dance  
Of Death in the now familiar flats of  
France;  
And murmured, "Strange, this! How?  
All firing stopped?"

VII

Aye; all was hushed. The about-to-fire  
fired not,  
The aimed-at moved away in trance-lipped  
song.

One checkless regiment slung a clinching  
shot  
And turned. The Spirit of Irony smirked  
out, "What?  
Spoil peradventures woven of Rage and  
Wrong?"

## VIII

Thenceforth no flying fires inflamed the  
gray,  
No hurtlings shook the dewdrop from the  
thorn,  
No moan perplexed the mute bird on the  
spray;  
Worn horses mused: "We are not  
whipped to-day";  
No west-winged engines blurred the moon's  
thin horn.

## IX

Calm fell. From Heaven distilled a  
clemency;  
There was peace on earth, and silence in  
the sky;  
Some could, some could not, shake off  
misery:  
The Sinister Spirit sneered: "It had  
to be!"  
And again the Spirit of Pity whispered,  
"Why?"

## HAUNTING FINGERS

A PHANTASY IN A MUSEUM OF MUSICAL  
INSTRUMENTS

“**A**RE you awake,  
Comrades, this silent night?  
Well 'twere if all of our glossy gluey  
make  
Lay in the damp without, and fell to  
fragments quite!”

“**O** viol, my friend,  
I watch, though Phosphor nears,  
And I fain would drowse away to its  
utter end  
This dumb dark stowage after our loud  
melodious years!”

And they felt past handlers clutch them,  
Though none was in the room,  
Old players' dead fingers touch them,  
Shrunk in the tomb.

“ ‘Cello, good mate,  
 You speak my mind as yours :  
 Doomed to this voiceless, crippled,  
 corpselike state,  
 Who, dear to famed Amphion, trapped  
 here, long endures ?”

“ Once I could thrill  
 The populace through and through,  
 Wake them to passioned pulsings past  
 their will.” . . .  
 (A contra-basso spake so, and the rest  
 sighed anew.)

And they felt old muscles travel  
 Over their tense contours,  
 And with long skill unravel  
 Cunningest scores.

“ The tender pat  
 Of her airy finger-tips  
 Upon me daily—I rejoiced thereat !”  
 (Thuswise a harpsicord, as from dampered  
 lips.)

“ My keys’ white shine,  
 Now sallow, met a hand  
 Even whiter. . . . Tones of hers fell  
 forth with mine  
 In sowings of sound so sweet no lover  
 ‘ could withstand !”

And its clavier was filmed with fingers  
 Like tapering flames—wan, cold—  
 Or the nebulous light that lingers  
 In charnel mould.

“Gayer than most  
 Was I,” reverbed a drum ;  
 “The regiments, marchings, throngs,  
 hurrahs! What a host  
 I stirred—even when crape muffleings  
 gagged me well-nigh dumb!”

Trilled an aged viol :  
 “Much tune have I set free  
 To spur the dance, since my first timid  
 trial  
 Where I had birth—far hence, in sun-  
 swept Italy!”

And he feels apt touches on him  
 From those that pressed him then ;  
 Who seem with their glance to con him,  
 Saying, “Not again!”

“A holy calm,”  
 Mourned a shawm’s voice subdued,  
 “Steeped my Cecilian rhythms when  
 hymn and psalm  
 Poured from devout souls met in Sabbath  
 sanctitude.”

“I faced the sock  
Nightly,” twanged a sick lyre,  
“Over ranked lights! O charm of life  
in mock,  
O scenes that fed love, hope, wit, rapture,  
mirth, desire!”

Thus they, till each past player  
Stroked thinner and more thin,  
And the morning sky grew grayer  
And day crawled in.

## THE WOMAN I MET

A STRANGER, I threaded sunken-hearted  
A lamp-lit crowd ;  
And anon there passed me a soul departed,  
Who mutely bowed.  
In my far-off youthful years I had met her,  
Full-pulsed ; but now, no more life's debtor,  
Onward she slid  
In a shroud that furs half-hid.

“Why do you trouble me, dead woman,  
Trouble me ;  
You whom I knew when warm and human ?  
—How it be  
That you quitted earth and are yet upon it  
Is, to any who ponder on it,  
Past being read !”  
“Still, it is so,” she said. •

“These were my haunts in my olden  
sprightly  
Hours of breath ;  
Here I went tempting frail youth nightly  
To their death ;  
But you deemed me chaste—me, a tinselled  
sinner !  
How thought you one with pureness in her  
Could pace this street  
Eyeing some man to greet ?

“Well ; your very simplicity made me love  
you  
Mid such town dross,  
Till I set not Heaven itself above you,  
Who grew my Cross ;  
For you'd only nod, despite how I sighed  
for you ;  
So you tortured me, who fain would have  
died for you !  
—What I suffered then  
Would have paid for the sins of ten !

“Thus went the days. I feared you de-  
spised me  
To fling me a nod  
Each time, no more : till love chastised me  
‘ As with a rod

That a fresh bland boy of no assurance  
 Should fire me with passion beyond endur-  
     ance,  
     While others all  
 I hated, and loathed their call.

“I said : ‘ It is his mother’s spirit  
     Hovering around  
 To shield him, maybe ! ’ I used to fear it,  
     As still I found  
 My beauty left no least impression,  
 And remnants of pride withheld confession  
     Of my true trade  
     By speaking ; so I delayed.

“I said : ‘ Perhaps with a costly flower  
     He’ll be beguiled.’  
 I held it, in passing you one late hour,  
     To your face : you smiled,  
 Keeping step with the throng ; though  
     you did not see there  
 A single one that rivalled me there ! . . .  
     Well : it’s all past.  
     I died in the Lock at last.”

So walked the dead and I together  
     The quick among,  
 Elbowing our kind of every feather  
     Slowly and long ;

Yea, long and slowly. That a phantom  
should stalk there  
With me seemed nothing strange, and talk  
there  
That winter night  
By flaming jets of light.

She showed me Juans who feared their  
call-time,

Guessing their lot;

She showed me her sort that cursed their  
fall-time,

And that did not.

Till suddenly murmured she: "Now, tell  
me,

Why asked you never, ere death befell me,  
To have my love,  
Much as I dreamt thereof?"

I could not answer. And she, well  
weeting

All in my heart,

Said: "God your guardian kept our  
fleeting

Forms apart!"

Sighing and drawing her furs around her  
Over the shroud that tightly bound her,

With wafts as from clay

She turned and thinned away.

## “ IF IT'S EVER SPRING AGAIN ”

(SONG)

IF it's ever spring again,  
Spring again,  
I shall go where went I when  
Down the moor-cock splashed, and hen,  
Seeing me not, amid their flounder,  
Standing with my arm around her ;  
If it's ever spring again,  
Spring again,  
I shall go where went I then.

If it's ever summer-time,  
Summer-time,  
With the hay crop at the prime,  
And the cuckoos—two—in rhyme,  
As they used to be, or seemed to,  
We shall do as long we've dreamed to,  
If it's ever summer-time,  
Summer-time,  
With the hay, and bees achime.

## THE TWO HOUSES

IN the heart of night,  
When farers were not near,  
The left house said to the house on the  
right,  
“I have marked your rise, O smart new-  
comer here.”

Said the right, cold-eyed :  
“ Newcomer here I am,  
Hence halter than you with your cracked  
old hide,  
Loose casements, wormy beams, and doors  
that jam.

“ Modern my wood,  
My hangings fair of hue ;  
While my windows open as they should,  
And water-pipes thread all my chambers  
through.

“Your gear is gray,  
Your face wears furrows untold.”

“—Yours might,” mourned the other,  
“if you held, brother,

The Presences from aforetime that I hold.

“You have not known  
Men's lives, deaths, toils, and teens ;  
You are but a heap of stick and stone :  
A new house has no sense of the have-beens.

“Void as a drum  
You stand : I am packed with these,  
Though, strangely, living dwellers who  
come  
See not the phantoms all my substance  
sees !

“Visible in the morning  
Stand they, when dawn drags in ;  
Visible at night ; yet hint or warning  
Of these thin elbowers few of the inmates  
win.

“Babes new-brought-forth  
Obsess my rooms ; straight-stretched  
Lank corpses, ere outborne to earth ;  
Yea, throng they as when first from the  
'Byss upfetched.

“ Dancers and singers  
Throb in me now as once ;  
Rich - noted throats and gossamered  
flingers  
Of heels ; the learned in love-lore and the  
dunce.

“ Note here within  
The bridegroom and the bride,  
Who smile and greet their friends and  
kin,  
And down my stairs depart for tracks  
untried.

“ Where such inbe,  
A dwelling’s character  
Takes theirs, and a vague semblancy  
To them in all its limbs, and light, and  
atmosphere.

“ Yet the blind folk  
My tenants, who come and go  
In the flesh mid these, with souls  
unwoke,  
Of such sylph-like surrounders do not  
know.”

“ —Will the day come,”  
‘Said the new one, awestruck, faint,

“When I shall lodge shades dim and  
dumb—  
And with such spectral guests become  
acquaint?”

“—That will it, boy;  
Such shades will people thee,  
Each in his misery, irk, or joy,  
And print on thee their presences as on  
me.”

## ON STINSFORD HILL AT MIDNIGHT

I GLIMPSED a woman's muslined form  
    Sing-songing airily  
Against the moon ; and still she sang,  
    And took no heed of me.

Another trice, and I beheld  
    What first I had not scanned,  
That now and then she tapped and shook  
    A timbrel in her hand.

So late the hour, so white her drape,  
    So strange the look it lent  
To that blank hill, I could not guess  
    What phantastry it meant.

Then burst I forth : " Why such from you ?  
    Are you so happy now ? "  
Her voice swam on ; nor did she show  
    Thought of me anyhow.

I called again : "Come nearer ; much  
That kind of note I need ! "

The song kept softening, loudening on,  
In placid calm unheed.

"What home is yours now ? " then I said ;  
" You seem to have no care."

But the wild wavering tune went forth  
As if I had not been there.

"This world is dark, and where you are,"  
I said, " I cannot be ! "

But still the happy one sang on,  
And had no heed of me.

## THE FALLOW DEER AT THE LONELY HOUSE

ONE without looks in to-night  
Through the curtain-chink  
From the sheet of glistening white ;  
One without looks in to-night  
As we sit and think  
By the fender-brink.

We do not discern those eyes  
Watching in the snow ;  
Lit by lamps of rosy dyes  
We do not discern those eyes  
Wondering, aglow,  
Fourfooted, tiptoe.

## THE SELFSAME SONG

**A** BIRD bills the selfsame song, ·  
With never a fault in its flow,  
That we listened to here those long  
Long years ago.

A pleasing marvel is how  
A strain of such rapturous rote  
Should have gone on thus till now  
Unchanged in a note !

—But it's not the selfsame bird.—  
No : perished to dust is he. . . .  
As also are those who heard  
That song with me.

## THE WANDERER

THERE is nobody on the road  
But I,  
And no beseeming abode  
I can try  
For shelter, so abroad  
I must lie.

The stars feel not far up,  
And to be  
The lights by which I sup  
Glimmeringly,  
Set out in a hollow cup  
Over me.

They wag as though they were  
Panting for joy  
Where they shine, above all care,  
And annoy,  
And demons of despair—  
Life's alloy.

Sometimes outside the fence  
    Feet swing past,  
Clock-like, and then go hence,  
    Till at last  
There is a silence, dense,  
    Deep, and vast.

A wanderer, witch-drawn  
    To and fro,  
To-morrow, at the dawn,  
    On I go,  
And where I rest anon  
    Do not know!

Yet it's meet—this bed of hay  
    And roofless plight;  
For there's a house of clay,  
    My own, quite,  
To roof me soon, all day  
    And all night.

## A WIFE COMES BACK

**T**HIS is the story a man told me  
Of his life's one day of dreamery.

A woman came into his room  
Between the dawn and the creeping day :  
She was the years-wed wife from whom  
He had parted, and who lived far away,  
As if strangers they.

He wondered, and as she stood  
She put on youth in her look and air,  
And more was he wonderstruck as he  
viewed  
Her form and flesh bloom yet more fair  
While he watched her there ;

Till she freshed to the pink and brown  
That were hers on the night when first  
they met,

When she was the charm of the idle town,  
And he the pick of the club-fire set. . . .  
His eyes grew wet,

And he stretched his arms : "Stay—  
rest!—"

He cried. "Abide with me so, my own!"  
But his arms closed in on his hard bare  
breast ;  
She had vanished with all he had looked  
upon  
Of her beauty : gone.

He clothed, and drew downstairs,  
But she was not in the house, he found ;  
And he passed out under the leafy pairs  
Of the avenue elms, and searched around  
• To the park-pale bound.

He mounted, and rode till night  
To the city to which she had long with-  
drawn,  
The vision he bore all day in his sight  
Being her young self as pondered on  
In the dim of dawn.

"—The lady here long ago—  
Is she now here?—young—or such age  
as she is?" •

80 A WIFE COMES BACK

“—She is still here.”—“Thank God. Let  
her know;  
She'll pardon a comer so late as this  
Whom she'd fain not miss.”

She received him—an ancient dame,  
Who hemmed, with features frozen and  
numb,  
“ How strange!—I'd almost forgotten your  
name!—  
A call just now—is troublesome;  
Why did you come?”

## A YOUNG MAN'S EXHORTATION

CALL off your eyes from care,  
By some determined destness ;  
put forth joys  
Dear as excess without the core that cloys,  
And charm Life's lourings fair.

Exalt and crown the hour  
That girdles us, and fill it full with glee,  
Blind glee, excelling aught could ever be  
• Were heedfulness in power.

Send up such touching strains  
That limitless recruits from Fancy's pack  
Shall rush upon your tongue, and tender  
back  
All that your soul contains.

For what do we know best ?  
That a fresh love-leaf crumpled soon will  
dry,  
And that men moment after moment die,  
Of all scope dispossess. •

## 82 A MAN'S EXHORTATION

If I have seen one thing  
It is the passing preciousness of dreams ;  
That aspects are within us ; and who seems  
Most kingly is the King.

1867 : WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS.

## AT LULWORTH COVE A CENTURY BACK

HAD I but lived a hundred years ago  
I might have gone, as I have gone  
this year,  
By Warmwell Cross on to a Cove I know,  
And Time have placed his finger on me  
there :

“ *You see that man?* ” — I might have  
looked, and said,  
“ O yes : I see him. One that boat has  
brought  
Which dropped down Channel round Saint  
Alban’s Head.  
So commonplace a youth calls not my  
thought.”

“ *You see that man?* ” —“ Why yes ; I told  
you ; yes :  
Of an idling town-sort ; thin ; hair brown  
in hue ;

84 AT LULWORTH COVE

And as the evening light scants less and  
less  
He looks up at a star, as many do."

"*You see that man?*"—"Nay, leave me!"  
then I plead,  
"I have fifteen miles to vamp across the  
lea,  
And it grows dark, and I am weary-kneed :  
I have said the third time ; yes, that man  
I see !"

"Good. That man goes to Rome--to  
death, despair ;  
And no one notes him now but you and I :  
A hundred years, and the world will follow  
him there,  
And bend with reverence where his ashes  
lie."

*September 1920.*

*Note.*-- In September 1820 Keats, on his way to Rome, landed one day on the Dorset coast, and composed the sonnet, "Bright star ! would I were steadfast as thou art." The spot of his landing is judged to have been Lulworth Cove.

## A BYGONE OCCASION

(SONG)

**T**HAT night, that night,  
That song, that song !  
Will such again be evened quite  
Through lifetimes long ?

No mirth was shown  
To outer seers,  
But mood to match has not been known  
In modern years.

O eyes that smiled,  
O lips that lured ;  
That such would last was one beguiled  
To think ensured !

That night, that night,  
That song, that song ;  
O drink to its recalled delight,  
Though tears may throng !

## TWO SERENADES

### I

#### *On Christmas Eve*

LATE on Christmas Eve, in the street  
alone,  
Outside a house, on the pavement-stone,  
I sang to her, as we'd sung together  
On former eves ere I felt her tether.—  
Above the door of green by me  
Was she, her casement seen by me ;  
But she would not heed  
What I melodied  
In my soul's sore need—  
She would not heed.

Cassiopeia overhead,  
And the Seven of the Wain, heard what I  
said  
As I bent me there, and voiced, and  
fingered  
Upon the strings. . . . Long, long I  
lingered :

Only the curtains hid from her  
 One whom caprice had bid from her ;  
 But she did not come,  
 And my heart grew numb  
 And dull my strum ;  
 She did not come.

## II

*A Year Later*

I SKIMMED the strings ; I sang quite  
 low ;  
 I hoped she would not come or know  
 That the house next door was the one  
 now dittied,  
 Not hers, as when I had played unpitied ;  
 —Next door, where dwelt a heart fresh  
 stirred,  
 My new Love, of good will to me,  
 Unlike my old Love chill to me,  
 Who had not cared for my notes when  
 heard :  
 Yet that old Love came  
 To the other's name  
 As hers were the claim ;  
 Yea, the old Love came

My viol sank mute, my tongue stood still,  
 I tried to sing on, but vain my will : •

I prayed she would guess of the later, and  
    leave me ;  
She stayed, as though, were she slain by  
    the smart,  
She would bear love's burn for a newer  
    heart.  
The tense - drawn moment wrought to  
    bereave me  
Of voice, and I turned in a dumb despair  
At her finding I'd come to another there.  
    Sick I withdrew  
    At love's grim hue  
    Ere my last Love knew ;  
    Sick I withdrew.

From an old copy.

## THE WEDDING MORNING

TABITHA dressed for her  
wedding:—

“Tabby, why look so sad?”  
“—O I feel a great gloominess spreading,  
spreading,  
Instead of supremely glad! . . .

“I called on Carry last night,  
And he came whilst I was there,  
Not knowing I'd called. So I kept out of  
sight,  
And I heard what he said to her:

“—Ah, I'd far liefer marry  
*You*, Dear, to-morrow!” he said,  
‘But that cannot be.’—O I'd give him to  
Carry,  
And willingly see them wed,

“But how can I do it when  
His baby will soon be born?  
After that I hope I may die. And then  
She can have him. I shall not  
mourn!”

## END OF THE YEAR 1912

YOU were here at his young beginning,  
You are not here at his aged end ;  
Off he coaxed you from Life's mad  
spinning,  
Lest you should see his form extend  
Shivering, sighing,  
Slowly dying,  
And a tear on him expend.

So it comes that we stand lonely  
In the star-lit avenue,  
Dropping broken lipwords only,  
For we hear no songs from you,  
Such as flew here  
For the new year  
Once, while six bells swung thereto.

## THE CHIMES PLAY "LIFE'S A BUMPER!"

"**A**WAKE! I'm off to cities far away,"  
I said ; and rose, on peradventures  
bent.

The chimes played "Life's a Bumper!" on  
that day

To the measure of my walking as I went :  
Their sweetness frisked and floated on the  
lea,

As they played out "Life's a Bumper!"  
there to me.

"Awake!" I said. "I go to take a  
bride!"

—The sun arose behind me ruby-red  
As I journeyed townwards from the  
countryside,

The chiming bells saluting near ahead.  
Their sweetness swelled in tripping tings  
of glee

As they played out "Life's a Bumper!"  
there to me.

92      "LIFE'S A BUMPER!"

"Again arise." I seek a turfy slope,  
And go forth slowly on an autumn noon,  
And there I lay her who has been my hope,  
And think, "O may I follow hither soon!"  
While on the wind the chimes come  
cheerily,  
Playing out "Life's a Bumper!" there to  
me.

1913.

**“I WORKED NO WILE TO  
MEET YOU”**

**(SONG)**

I WORKED no wile to meet you,  
My sight was set elsewhere,  
I sheered about to shun you,  
And lent your life no care.  
I was unprimed to greet you  
At such a date and place,  
Constraint alone had won you  
Vision of my strange face!

You did not seek to see me  
Then or at all, you said,  
—Meant passing when you neared me,  
But stumblingblocks forbade.  
You even had thought to flee me,  
By other mindings moved ;  
No influent star endeared me,  
Unknown, unrecked, unproved ! .

94 "I WORKED NO WILE"

What, then, was there to tell us  
The flux of fluttering hours  
Of their own tide would bring us  
By no device of ours  
To where the daysprings well us  
Heart-hydromels that cheer,  
Till Time enearth and swing us  
Round with the turning sphere.

## AT THE RAILWAY STATION, UPWAY

“**T**HERE is not much that I can do,  
For I’ve no money that’s quite my  
own!”

Spoke up the pitying child—  
A little boy with a violin  
At the station before the train came in,—  
“But I can play my fiddle to you,  
And a nice one ’tis, and good in tone!”

The man in the handcuffs smiled ;  
The constable looked, and he smiled, too,  
As the fiddle began to twang ;  
And the man in the handcuffs suddenly sang  
Uproariously :  
“This life so free  
Is the thing for me !”  
And the constable smiled, and said no word,  
As if unconscious of what he heard ;  
And so they went on till the train came in—  
The convict, and boy with the violin.

## SIDE BY SIDE

**S**O there sat they,  
The estranged two,  
Thrust in one pew  
By chance that day ;  
Placed so, breath-nigh,  
Each comer unwitting  
Who was to be sitting  
In touch close by.

Thus side by side  
Blindly alighted,  
They seemed united  
As groom and bride,  
Who'd not communed  
For many years—  
Lives from twain spheres  
With hearts distuned.

Her fringes brushed  
His garment's hem  
As the harmonies rushed  
Through each of them :  
Her lips could be heard  
In the creed and psalms,  
And their fingers neared  
At the giving of alms.

And women and men,  
The matins ended,  
By looks commended  
Them, joined again.  
Quickly said she,  
“ Don't undeceive them—  
Better thus leave them : ”  
“ Quite so,” said he.

Slight words !—the last  
Between them said,  
Those two, once wed,  
Who had not stood fast.  
Diverse their ways  
From the western door,  
To meet no more  
In their span of days.

## DREAM OF THE CITY SHOPWOMAN

**T**WERE sweet to have a comrade here,  
Who'd vow to love this garreteer,  
By city people's snap and sneer  
Tried oft and hard !

We'd rove a truant cock and hen  
To some snug solitary glen,  
And never be seen to haunt again  
This teeming yard.

Within a cot of thatch and clay  
We'd list the flitting pipers play,  
Our lives a twine of good and gay  
Enwreathed discreetly ;

Our blitest deeds so neighbouring wise  
That doves should coo in soft surprise,  
" These must belong to Paradise  
Who live so sweetly."

Our clock should be the closing flowers,  
Our sprinkle-bath the passing showers,  
Our church the alleyed willow bowers,  
The truth our theme ;

And infant shapes might soon abound :  
Their shining heads would dot us round  
Like mushroom balls on grassy ground. . . .  
—But all is dream !

O God, that creatures framed to feel  
A yearning nature's strong appeal  
Should writhe on this eternal wheel  
In rayless grime ;

And vainly note, with wan regret,  
Each star of early promise set ;  
Till Death relieves, and they forget  
Their one Life's time !

WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS, 1866.

## A MAIDEN'S PLEDGE

(SONG)

I DO not wish to win your vow  
To take me soon or late as bride,  
And lift me from the nook where now  
I tarry your farings to my side.  
I am blissful ever to abide  
In this green labyrinth—let all be,  
If but, whatever may betide,  
You do not leave off loving me!

Your comet-comings I will wait  
With patience time shall not wear through ;  
The yellowing years will not abate  
My largened love and truth to you,  
Nor drive me to complaint undue  
Of absence, much as I may pine,  
If never another 'twixt us two  
Shall come, and you stand wholly mine.

## THE CHILD AND THE SAGE

YOU say, O Sage, when weather-checked,  
"I have been favoured so  
With cloudless skies, I must expect  
This dash of rain or snow."

"Since health has been my lot," you say,  
"So many months of late,  
I must not chafe that one short day  
Of sickness mars my state."

You say, "Such bliss has been my share  
From Love's unbroken smile,  
It is but reason I should bear  
A cross therein awhile."

And thus you do not count upon  
Continuance of joy ;  
But, when at ease, expect anon  
A burden of annoy.

102 THE CHILD AND THE SAGE

But, Sage—this Earth—why not a place  
Where no reprisals reign,  
Where never a spell of pleasantness  
Makes reasonable a pain ?

*December 21, 1908.*

## MISMET

### I

HE was leaning by a face,  
He was looking into eyes,  
And he knew a trysting-place,  
And he heard seductive sighs ;  
But the face,  
And the eyes,  
And the place,  
And the sighs,  
Were not, alas, the right ones—the ones  
meet for him—  
Though fine and sweet the features, and  
the feelings all abrim.

### II

She was looking at a form,  
She was listening for a tread,  
She could feel a waft of charm  
When a certain name was said ; •

But the form,  
And the tread,  
And the charm  
Of name said,  
Were the wrong ones for her, and ever  
would be so,  
While the heritor of the right it would  
have saved her soul to know !

## AN AUTUMN RAIN-SCENE

**T**HERE trudges one to a merry-making  
With a sturdy swing,  
On whom the rain comes down.

To fetch the saving medicament  
Is another bent,  
On whom the rain comes down.

One slowly drives his herd to the stall  
Ere ill befall,  
On whom the rain comes down.

This bears his missives of life and death  
With quickening breath,  
On whom the rain comes down.

One watches for signals of wreck or war  
From the hill afar,  
On whom the rain comes down.

106 AN AUTUMN RAIN-SCENE

No care if he gain a shelter or none,  
    Unhired moves one,  
On whom the rain comes down.

And another knows nought of its chilling  
    fall  
    Upon him at all,  
On whom the rain comes down.

*October 1904.*

## MEDITATIONS ON A HOLIDAY

(A NEW THEME TO AN OLD FOLK-JINGLE)

'T IS a May morning,  
    All-adorning,  
No cloud warning  
    Of rain to-day.  
Where shall I go to,  
Go to, go to?—  
Can I say No to  
    Lyonnesse-way ?

Well—what reason  
Now at this season  
Is there for treason  
    To other shrines?  
Tristram is not there,  
Isolt forgot there,  
New eras blot there  
    Sought-for signs !

Stratford-on-Avon—  
Poesy-paven—  
I'll find a haven  
    There, somehow!—  
Nay—I'm but caught of  
Dreams long thought of,  
The Swan knows nought of  
    His Avon now!

What shall it be, then,  
I go to see, then,  
Under the plea, then,  
    Of votary?  
I'll go to Lakeland,  
Lakeland, Lakeland,  
Certainly Lakeland  
    Let it be.

But—why to that place,  
That place, that place,  
Such a hard come-at place  
    Need I fare?  
When its bard cheers no more,  
Loves no more, fears no more,  
Sees no more, hears no more  
    Anything there!

Ah, there is Scotland,  
Burns's Scotland,  
And Waverley's. To what land  
    Better can I hie?—

Yet—if no whit now  
Feel those of it now—  
Care not a bit now  
For it—why I ?

I'll seek a town street,  
Aye, a brick-brown street,  
Quite a tumbledown street,  
Drawing no eyes.  
For a Mary dwelt there,  
And a Percy felt there  
Heart of him melt there,  
A Claire likewise.

Why incline to *that* city,  
Such a city, *that* city,  
Now a mud-bespat city !—  
Care the lovers who  
Now live and walk there,  
Sit there and talk there,  
Buy there, or hawk there,  
Or wed, or woo ?

Laughters in a volley  
Greet so fond a folly  
As nursing melancholy  
In this and that spot,  
Which, with most endeavour,  
Those can visit never,  
But for ever and ever  
Will now know not !

If, on lawns Elysian,  
With a broadened vision  
And a faint derision  
Conscious be they,  
How they might reprove me  
That these fancies move me,  
Think they ill behoove me,  
Smile, and say :

“ What !—our hoar old houses,  
Where the past dead-drowses,  
Nor a child nor spouse is  
Of our name at all ?  
Such abodes to care for,  
Inquire about and bear for,  
And suffer wear and tear for—  
How weak of you and small ! ”

*May 1921.*

## AN EXPERIENCE

WIT, weight, or wealth there was not  
In anything that was said,  
In anything that was done ;  
All was of scope to cause not  
A triumph, dazzle, or dread  
To even the subtlest one,  
My friend,  
To even the subtlest one.

But there was a new affliction—  
An aura zephyring round,  
That care infected not :  
It came as a salutation,  
And, in my sweet astound,  
I scarcely witted what  
Might pend,  
I scarcely witted what.

The hills in samewise to me  
Spoke, as they grayly gazed,  
—First hills to speak so yet !

The thin-edged breezes blew me  
What I, though cobwebbed, crazed,  
Was never to forget,  
My friend,  
Was never to forget!

## THE BEAUTY

O DO not praise my beauty more,  
In such word-wild degree,  
And say I am one all eyes adore ;  
For these things harass me !

But do for ever softly say :  
“ From now unto the end  
Come weal, come wanzing, come what may,  
Dear, I will be your friend.”

I hate my beauty in the glass :  
My beauty is not I :  
I wear it : none cares whether, alas,  
• Its wearer live or die !

The inner I O care for, then,  
Yea, me and what I am,  
And shall be at the gray hour when  
My cheek begins to clam.

*Note.*—“ The Regent Street beauty, Miss Verrey, the Swiss confectioner’s daughter, whose personal attractions have been so mischievously exaggerated, died of fever on Monday evening, brought on by the annoyance she had been for some time subject to.”—London paper, October 1828.

## THE COLLECTOR CLEANS HIS PICTURE

Fili hominis, ecce ego tollo a te desiderabile oculorum tuorum in plaga.—EZECH. xxiv. 16.

HOW I remember cleaning that  
strange picture! . . .  
I had been deep in duty for my sick neigh-  
bour—  
His besides my own—over several Sundays,  
Often, too, in the week; so with parish  
pressures,  
Baptisms, burials, doctorings, conjugal  
counsel—  
All the whatnots asked of a rural parson—  
Faith, I was well-nigh broken, should have  
been fully  
Saving for one small secret relaxation,  
One that in mounting manhood had grown  
my hobby.

This was to delve at whiles for easel-lumber,  
Stowed in the backmost slums of a soon-reached city,  
Merely on chance to uncloak some worthy canvas,  
Panel, or plaque, blacked blind by uncouth adventure,  
Yet under all concealing a precious art-feat.  
Such I had found not yet. My latest capture  
Came from the rooms of a trader in ancient house-gear  
Who had no scent of beauty or soul for brushcraft.  
Only a tittle cost it—murked with grime-films,  
Gatherings of slow years, thick-varnished over,  
Never a feature manifest of man's painting.

So, one Saturday, time ticking hard on midnight  
Ere an hour subserved, I set me upon it.  
Long with coiled-up sleeves I cleaned and yet cleaned,  
Till a first fresh spot, a high light, looked forth,  
Then another, like fair flesh, and another;

Then a curve, a nostril, and next a finger,  
Tapering, shapely, significantly pointing  
slantwise.

“Flemish?” I said. “Nay, Spanish. . . .  
But, nay, Italian!”

—Then meseemed it the guise of the  
ranker Venus,

Named of some Astarte, of some Cotytto.  
Down I knelt before it and kissed the  
panel,  
Drunk with the lure of love’s inhibited  
dreamings.

Till the dawn I rubbed, when there  
gazed up at me

A hag, that had slowly emerged from  
under my hands there,

Pointing the slanted finger towards a  
bosom

Eaten away of a rot from the lusts of a  
lifetime. . . .

—I could have ended myself in heart-  
shook horror.

Stunned I sat till roused by a clear-voiced  
bell-chime,

Fresh and sweet as the dew-fleece under  
my luthern.

It was the matin service calling to me  
From the adjacent steeple.

## THE WOOD FIRE

(A FRAGMENT)

"THIS is a brightsome blaze you've  
lit, good friend, to-night!"

"—Aye, it has been the bleakest spring I  
have felt for years,  
And nought compares with cloven logs to  
keep alight :  
I buy them bargain-cheap of the execu-  
tioners,  
As I dwell near ; and they wanted the  
crosses out of sight  
By Passover, not to affront the eyes of  
visitors.

"Yes, they're from the crucifixions last  
week-ending  
At Kranion. We can sometimes use the  
poles again,

But they get split by the nails, and 'tis  
quicker work than mending  
To knock together new; though the up-  
rights now and then  
Serve twice when they're let stand. But  
if a feast's impending,  
As lately, you've to tidy up for the comers'  
ken.

“ Though only three were impaled, you  
may know it didn't pass off  
So quietly as was wont? That Galilee  
carpenter's son  
Who boasted he was king, incensed the  
rabble to scoff:  
I heard the noise from my garden. This  
piece is the one he was on. . . .  
Yes, it blazes up well if lit with a few dry  
chips and shroff;  
And it's worthless for much else, what  
with cuts and stains thereon.”

## SAYING GOOD-BYE

(SONG)

WE are always saying  
“Good-bye, good-bye!”  
In work, in playing,  
In gloom, in gaying :  
At many a stage  
Of pilgrimage  
From youth to age  
We say, “Good-bye,  
Good-bye !”

We are undiscerning  
Which go to sigh,  
Which will be yearning  
For soon returning ;  
And which no more  
Will dark our door,  
Or tread our shore,  
But go to die,  
To die.

## SAYING GOOD-BYE

Some come from roaming  
With joy again ;  
Some, who come homing  
By stealth at gloaming,  
Had better have stopped  
Till death, and dropped  
By strange hands propped,  
Than come so fain,  
So fain.

So, with this saying,  
“Good-bye, good-bye,”  
We speed their waying  
Without betraying  
Our grief, our fear  
No more to hear  
From them, close, clear,  
Again : “Good-bye,  
Good-bye !”

## ON THE TUNE CALLED THE OLD-HUNDRED-AND-FOURTH

WE never sang together  
Ravenscroft's terse old tune  
On Sundays or on weekdays,  
In sharp or summer weather,  
At night-time or at noon.

Why did we never sing it,  
Why never so incline  
On Sundays or on weekdays,  
Even when soft wafts would wing it  
From your far floor to mine?

Shall we that tune, then, never  
Stand voicing side by side  
On Sundays or on weekdays? . . .  
Or shall we, when for ever  
In Sheol we abide,

Sing it in desolation,  
As we might long have done  
On Sundays or on weekdays  
With love and exultation  
Before our sands had run ?

## THE OPPORTUNITY

(FOR H. P.)

FORTY springs back, I recall,  
We met at this phase of the Maytime:  
We might have clung close through all,  
But we parted when died that daytime.

We parted with smallest regret ;  
Perhaps should have cared but slightly,  
Just then, if we never had met :  
Strange, strange that we lived so lightly !

Had we mused a little space  
At that critical date in the Maytime,  
One life had been ours, one place,  
Perhaps, till our long cold claytime.

—This is a bitter thing  
For thee, O man : what ails it ?  
The tide of chance may bring  
Its offer ; but nought avails it !

## EVELYN G. OF CHRISTMINSTER

I CAN see the towers  
In mind quite clear  
Not many hours'  
Faring from here;  
But how up and go,  
And briskly bear  
Thither, and know  
That you are not there?

Though the birds sing small,  
And apple and pear  
On your trees by the wall  
Are ripe and rare,  
Though none excel them,  
I have no care  
To taste them or smell them  
And you not there.

Though the College stones  
Are smit with the sun,  
And the graduates and Dons  
Who held you as one

Of brightest brow  
Still think as they did,  
Why haunt with them now  
Your candle is hid?

Towards the river  
A pealing swells :—  
They cost me a quiver—  
Those prayerful bells !  
How go to God,  
Who can reprove  
With so heavy a rod  
As your swift remove !

The chorded keys  
Wait all in a row,  
And the bellows wheeze  
As long ago.  
And the psalter lingers,  
And organist's chair ;  
But where are your fingers  
That once wagged there ?

Shall I then seek  
That desert place  
This or next week,  
And those tracks trace  
That fill me with cark  
And cloy ; nowhere  
Being movement or mark  
Of you now there !

## THE RIFT

(SONG : *Minor Mode*)

"TWAS just at gnat and cobweb-time,  
When yellow begins to show in the  
leaf,

That your old gamut changed its chime  
From those true tones — of span so  
brief! —

That met my beats of joy, of grief,  
As rhyme meets rhyme.

So sank I from my high sublime!  
We faced but chancewise after that,  
And never I knew or guessed my  
crime. . . .

Yes ; 'twas the date—or nigh thereat—  
Of the yellowing leaf ; at moth and gnat  
And cobweb-time.

## VOICES FROM THINGS GROWING IN A CHURCHYARD

THESE flowers are I, poor Fanny  
Hurd,  
Sir or Madam,  
A little girl here sepultured.  
Once I flit-fluttered like a bird  
Above the grass, as now I wave  
In daisy shapes above my grave,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily !

—I am one Bachelor Bowring, “Gent,”  
Sir or Madam ;  
In shingled oak my bones were pent ;  
Hence more than a hundred years I spent  
In my feat of change from a coffin-thrall  
To a dancer in green as leaves on a wall.  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily !

—I, these berries of juice and gloss,  
 Sir or Madam,  
 Am clean forgotten as Thomas Voss ;  
 Thin-urned, I have burrowed away from  
 the moss  
 That covers my sod, and have entered this  
 yew,  
 And turned to clusters ruddy of view,  
 All day cheerily,  
 All night eerily !

—The Lady Gertrude, proud, high-bred,  
 Sir or Madam,  
 Am I—this laurel that shades your head ;  
 Into its veins I have stilly sped,  
 And made them of me ; and my leaves  
 now shine,  
 As did my satins superfine,  
 All day cheerily,  
 All night eerily !

—I, who as innocent withwind climb,  
 Sir or Madam.  
 Am one Eve Greensleeves, in olden time  
 Kissed by men from many a clime,  
 Beneath sun, stars, in blaze, in breeze,  
 As now by glowworms and by bees,  
 All day cheerily,  
 All night eerily !<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was said her real name was Eve Trevillian or

—I'm old Squire Audeley Grey, who grew,  
Sir or Madam,  
Aweary of life, and in scorn withdrew ;  
Till anon I clambered up anew  
As ivy-green, when my ache was stayed,  
And in that attire I have longtime gayed  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily !

—And so they breathe, these masks, to  
each

Sir or Madam

Who lingers there, and their lively speech  
Affords an interpreter much to teach,  
As their murmurous accents seem to come  
Thence hitheraround in a radiant hum,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily !

---

Trevelyan ; and that she was the handsome mother of  
two or three illegitimate children, *circa* 1784-95.

## ON THE WAY

THE trees fret fitfully and twist,  
Shutters rattle and carpets heave,  
Slime is the dust of yestereve,  
And in the streaming mist  
Fishes might seem to fin a passage if they  
list.

But to his feet,  
Drawing nigh and nigher  
A hidden seat,  
The fog is sweet  
And the wind a lyre.

A vacant sameness grays the sky,  
A moisture gathers on each knop  
Of the bramble, rounding to a drop,  
That greets the goer-by  
With the cold listless lustre of a dead man's  
eye.

But to her sight,  
Drawing nigh and nigher  
Its deep delight,  
The fog is bright  
And the wind a lyre.

## “SHE DID NOT TURN”

HE did not turn,  
But passed foot-faint with  
averted head

In her gown of green, by the bobbing fern,  
Though I leaned over the gate that led  
From where we waited with table spread ;  
But she did not turn :  
Why was she near there if love had fled ?

She did not turn,  
Though the gate was whence I had often  
sped

In the mists of morning to meet her, and  
learn  
Her heart, when its moving moods I read  
As a book—she mine, as she sometimes  
said ;

But she did not turn,  
And passed foot-faint with averted head.

## GROWTH IN MAY

I ENTER a daisy-and-buttercup land,  
And thence thread a jungle of grass :  
Hurdles and stiles scarce visible stand  
Above the lush stems as I pass.

Hedges peer over, and try to be seen,  
And seem to reveal a dim sense  
That amid such ambitious and elbow-high  
green  
They make a mean show as a fence.  
.

Elsewhere the mead is possessed of the  
neats,  
That range not greatly above  
The rich rank thicket which brushes their  
teats,  
And *her* gown, as she waits for her  
Love.

NEAR CHARD.

## THE CHILDREN AND SIR NAMELESS

SIR NAMELESS, once of Athelhall,  
declared :  
“ These wretched children romping in my  
park  
Trample the herbage till the soil is bared,  
And yap and yell from early morn till  
dark !  
Go keep them harnessed to their set  
routines :  
Thank God I’ve none to hasten my decay ;  
For green remembrance there are better  
means  
Than offspring, who but wish their sires  
away.”

Sir Nameless of that mansion said anon :  
“ To be perpetuate for my mightiness  
Sculpture must image me when I am gone.”

—He forthwith summoned carvers there  
express  
To shape a figure stretching seven-odd feet  
(For he was tall) in alabaster stone,  
With shield, and crest, and casque, and  
sword complete :  
When done a statelier work was never  
known.

Three hundred years hied; Church-restorers  
came,  
And, no one of his lineage being traced,  
They thought an effigy so large in frame  
Best fitted for the floor. There it was  
placed,  
Under the seats for schoolchildren. And  
they  
Kicked out his name, and hobnailed off  
his nose ;  
And, as they yawn through sermon-time,  
they say,  
“ Who was this old stone man beneath our  
toes ? ”

## AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY

THESE summer landscapes — clump,  
and copse, and croft—  
Woodland and meadowland — here hung  
aloft,  
Gay with limp grass and leafery new and  
soft,

Seem caught from the immediate season's  
yield

I saw last noonday shining over the field,  
By rapid snatch, while still are uncongealed

The saps that in their live originals climb ;  
Yester's quick greenage here set forth in  
mime

Just as it stands, now, at our breathing-time.

But these young foils so fresh upon each  
tree,  
Soft verdures spread in sprouting novelty,  
Are not this summer's, though they feign  
to be.

## AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY 137

Last year their May to Michaelmas term  
was run,  
Last autumn browned and buried every  
one,  
And no more know they sight of any sun.

## HER TEMPLE

DEAR, think not that they will forget  
you :

—If craftsmanly art should be mine  
I will build up a temple, and set you  
Therein as its shrine.

They may say: “Why a woman such  
honour?”

—Be told, “O, so sweet was her  
fame,  
That a man heaped this splendour upon  
her;  
None now knows his name.”

## A TWO-YEARS' IDYLL

YES; such it was;  
Just those two seasons  
unsought,  
Sweeping like summertide wind on our  
ways;  
Moving, as straws,  
Hearts quick as ours in those days;  
Going like wind, too, and rated as nought  
Save as the prelude to plays  
Soon to come—larger, life-fraught:  
Yes; such it was.

“Nought” it was called,  
Even by ourselves — that which  
springs  
Out of the years for all flesh, first or last,  
Commonplace, scrawled  
Dully on days that go past.  
Yet, all the while, it upbore us like wings  
Even in hours overcast:  
Aye, though this best thing of things,  
“Nought” it was called! •

What seems it now?

Lost: such beginning was all;  
Nothing came after: romance straight  
forsook

Quickly somehow

Life when we sped from our nook,  
Primed for new scenes with designs smart  
and tall. . . .

—A preface without any book,  
A trumpet uplipped, but no call;  
That seems it now.

## BY HENSTRIDGE CROSS AT THE YEAR'S END

(From this centuries-old cross-road the highway leads east to London, north to Bristol and Bath, west to Exeter and the Land's End, and south to the Channel coast.)

WHY go the east road now? . . .  
That way a youth went on a  
morrow

After mirth, and he brought back sorrow  
Painted upon his brow :  
Why go the east road now?

Why go the north road now?  
Torn, leaf-strewn, as if scoured by foemen,  
Once edging fiefs of my forefolk yeomen,  
Fallows fat to the plough :  
Why go the north road now?

Why go the west road now?  
Thence to us came she, bosom-burning,  
Welcome with joyousness returning. . . .  
She sleeps under the bough :  
Why go the west road now?

Why go the south road now?  
That way marched they some are for-  
getting,  
Stark to the moon left, past regretting  
Loves who have falsed their vow. . . .  
Why go the south road now?

Why go any road now?  
White stands the handpost for brisk on-  
bearers,  
“Halt!” is the word for wan-cheeked  
farers  
Musing on Whither, and How. . . .  
Why go any road now?

“Yea: we want new feet now”  
Answer the stones. “Want chit-chat,  
laughter:  
Plenty of such to go hereafter  
By our tracks, we trow!  
We are for new feet now.”

*During the War.*

## PENANCE

“ **W**HY do you sit, O pale thin man,  
At the end of the room  
By that harpsichord, built on the quaint  
old plan ?

—It is cold as a tomb,  
And there's not a spark within the grate ;  
And the jingling wires  
Are as vain desires  
That have lagged too late.”

“ Why do I ? Alas, far times ago  
A woman lyred here  
In the evenfall ; one who fain did so  
From year to year ;  
And, in loneliness bending wistfully,  
Would wake each note  
In sick sad note,  
None to listen or see !

“ I would not join. I would not stay,  
But drew away,  
Though the winter fire beamed brightly.  
. . . Aye!  
I do to-day  
What I would not then ; and the chill old  
keys,  
Like a skull’s brown teeth  
Loose in their sheath,  
Freeze my touch ; yes, freeze.”

## “I LOOK IN HER FACE”

(SONG : *Minor*)

I LOOK in her face and say,  
“Sing as you used to sing  
About Love’s blossoming”;  
But she hints not Yea or Nay.

“Sing, then, that Love’s a pain,  
If, Dear, you think it so,  
Whether it be or no ;”  
But dumb her lips remain.

I go to a far-off room,  
A faint song ghosts my ear ;  
*Which* song I cannot hear,  
But it seems to come from a tomb.

## AFTER THE WAR

**L**AST Post sounded  
Across the mead  
To where he loitered  
With absent heed.  
Five years before  
In the evening there  
Had flown that call  
To him and his Dear.  
“ You’ll never come back ;  
Good-bye ! ” she had said ;  
“ Here I’ll be living,  
And my Love dead ! ”

Those closing minims  
Had been as shafts darting  
Through him and her pressed  
In that last parting ;  
They thrilled him not now,  
In the selfsame place  
With the selfsame sun

On his war-seamed face.  
"Lurks a god's laughter  
In this?" he said,  
"That I am the living  
And she the dead!"

## “IF YOU HAD KNOWN”

I F you had known  
When listening with her to  
the far-down moan  
Of the white-selvaged and empurpled sea,  
And rain came on that did not hinder talk,  
Or damp your flashing facile gaiety  
In turning home, despite the slow wet walk  
By crooked ways, and over stiles of stone ;  
If you had known

You would lay roses,  
Fifty years thence, on her monument, that  
discloses  
Its graying shape upon the luxuriant  
green ;  
Fifty years thence to an hour, by chance  
led there,  
What might have moved you ?—yea, had  
you foreseen

“IF YOU HAD KNOWN” 149

That on the tomb of the selfsame one,  
    gone where  
The dawn of every day is as the close is,  
    You would lay roses !

1920.

## THE CHAPEL-ORGANIST

(A.D. 185—)

I'VE been thinking it through, as I play  
here to-night, to play never again,  
By the light of that lowering sun peering  
in at the window-pane,  
And over the back-street roofs, throwing  
shades from the boys of the chore  
In the gallery, right upon me, sitting up  
to these keys once more. . . .

How I used to hear tongues ask, as I sat  
here when I was new :  
“ Who is she playing the organ ? She  
touches it mightily true ! ”  
“ She travels from Havenpool Town,” the  
deacon would softly speak,  
“ The stipend can hardly cover her fare  
hither twice in the week.”

(It fell far short of doing, indeed ; but I never told,  
For I have craved minstrelsy more than lovers, or beauty, or gold.)

'Twas so he answered at first, but the story grew different later :  
"It cannot go on much longer, from what we hear of her now!"  
At the meaning wheeze in the words the inquirer would shift his place  
Till he could see round the curtain that screened me from people below.  
"A handsome girl," he would murmur, upstaring, (and so I am).  
"But—too much sex in her build ; fine eyes, but eyelids too heavy ;  
A bosom too full for her age ; in her lips too voluptuous a look."  
(It may be. But who put it there ? Assuredly it was not I.)

I went on playing and singing when this I had heard, and more,  
Though tears half-blinded me ; yes, I remained going on and on,  
Just as I used me to chord and to sing at the selfsame time ! . . .  
For it's a contralto—my voice is ; they'll hear it again here to-night ,

## 152 THE CHAPEL-ORGANIST

In the psalmody notes that 'I love more than world or than flesh or than life.

Well, the deacon, in fact, that day had learnt new tidings about me ;  
They troubled his mind not a little, for he was a worthy man.

(He trades as a chemist in High Street, and during the week he had sought His fellow-deacon, who thrrove as a book-binder over the way.)

"These are strange rumours," he said.  
"We must guard the good name of the chapel.

If, sooth, she's of evil report, what else can we do but dismiss her ?"

"—But get such another to play here we cannot for double the price !"

It settled the point for the time, and I triumphed awhile in their strait,  
And my much-beloved grand semibreves went living on under my fingers.

At length in the congregation more head-shakes and murmurs were rife,  
And my dismissal was ruled, though I was not warned of it then.

But a day came when they declared it.  
The news entered me as a sword ;

I was broken; so pallid of face that they  
thought I should faint, they said.  
I rallied. "O, rather than go, I will play  
you for nothing!" said I.  
'Twas in much desperation I spoke it, for  
bring me to forfeit I could not  
Those melodies chorded so richly for  
which I had laboured and lived.  
They paused. And for nothing I played  
at the chapel through Sundays anon,  
Upheld by that art which I loved more  
than blandishments lavished of men.

But it fell that murmurs again from the  
flock broke the pastor's peace.  
Some member had seen me at Havenpool,  
comrading close a sea-captain.  
(Yes; I was thereto constrained, lacking  
means for the fare to and fro.)  
Yet God knows, if aught He knows ever,  
I loved the Old-Hundredth, Saint  
Stephen's,  
Mount Zion, New Sabbath, Miles-Lane,  
Holy Rest, and Arabia, and Eaton,  
Above all embraces of body by wooers  
who sought me and won! . . .  
Next week 'twas declared I was seen  
coming home with a lover at dawn,

## 154 THE CHAPEL-ORGANIST

The deacons insisted then, 'strong ; and  
forgiveness I did not implore.

I saw all was lost for me, quite, but I made  
a last bid in my throbs.

High love had been beaten by lust ; and  
the senses had conquered the soul,  
But the soul should die game, if I knew it !

I turned to my masters and said :  
" I yield, Gentlemen, without parlance.  
But—let me just hymn you *once*  
more !

It's a little thing, Sirs, that I ask ; and a  
passion is music with me ! "

They saw that consent would cost nothing,  
and show as good grace, as knew I,

Though tremble I did, and feel sick, as I  
paused thereat, dumb for their words.

They gloomily nodded assent, saying,  
" Yes, if you care to. Once more,

And only once more, understand." To  
that with a bend I agreed.

— " You've a fixed and a far-reaching  
look," spoke one who had eyed me  
awhile.

“ I've a fixed and a far-reaching plan, and  
my look only showed it,” said I.

This evening of Sunday is come—the last  
of my functioning here.

“She plays as if she were possessed!”  
they exclaim, glancing upward and round.

“Such harmonies I never dreamt the old  
instrument capable of!”

Meantime the sun lowers and goes ; shades  
deepen ; the lights are turned up,  
And the people voice out the last singing :  
    tune Tallis : the Evening Hymn. .

(I wonder Dissenters sing Ken : it shows  
    them more liberal in spirit

At this little chapel down here than at  
    certain new others I know.)

I sing as I play. Murmurs some one :  
    “No woman’s throat richer than  
    hers!”

“True : in these parts, at least,” ponder I.  
    “But, my man, you will hear it no  
    more.”

And I sing with them onward : “The  
grave dread as little do I as my bed.”

I lift up my feet from the pedals ; and  
    then, while my eyes are still wet

From the symphonies born of my fingers,  
    I do that whereon I am set,

And draw from my “full round bosom,”  
    (their words ; how can *I* help its  
    heave ?) •

A bottle blue-coloured and fluted—a vin-aigrette, they may conceive—  
And before the choir measures my meaning,  
reads aught in my moves to and fro,  
I drink from the phial at a draught, and  
they think it a pick-me-up; so.  
Then I gather my books as to leave, bend  
over the keys as to pray.  
When they come to me motionless, stooping,  
quick death will have whisked  
me away.

“Sure, nobody meant her to poison herself  
in her haste, after all!”  
The deacons will say as they carry me  
down and the night shadows fall,  
“Though the charges were true,” they will  
add. “It’s a case red as scarlet  
withal!”  
I have never once minced it. Lived chaste  
I have not. Heaven knows it  
above! . . .  
But past all the heavings of passion—it’s  
music has been my life-love! . . .  
That tune did go well—this last play-  
ing! . . . I reckon they’ll bury me  
here. . . .  
Not a soul from the seaport my birthplace  
—will come, or bestow me . . . a tear.

## FETCHING HER

AN hour before the dawn,  
My friend,  
You lit your waiting bedside-lamp,  
Your breakfast-fire anon,  
And outing into the dark and damp  
You saddled, and set on.

Thuswise, before the day,  
My friend,  
You sought her on her surfy shore,  
To fetch her thence away  
Unto your own new-builded door  
For a staunch lifelong stay.

You said : “ It seems to be,  
My friend,  
That I were bringing to my place  
The pure brine breeze, the sea,  
The mews—all her old sky and space,  
In bringing her with me ! ”

—But time is prompt to expugn,  
    My friend,  
Such magic-minted conjurings :  
    The brought breeze fainted soon,  
And then the sense of seamews' wings,  
    And the shore's sibilant tune.

So, it had been more due,  
    My friend,  
Perhaps, had you not pulled this flower  
    From the craggy nook it knew,  
And set it in an alien bower ;  
    But left it where it grew !

## “COULD I BUT WILL”

(SONG: *VerSES 1, 3, key major; verse 2, key minor*)

COULD I but will,  
Will to my bent,  
I'd have afar ones near me still,  
And music of rare ravishment,  
In strains that move the toes and heels !  
And when the sweethearts sat for rest  
The unbetrothed should foot with zest  
Ecstatic reels.

Could I be head,  
Head-god, “Come, now,  
Dear girl,” I'd say, “whose flame is fled,  
Who liest with linen-banded brow,  
Stirred but by shakes from Earth's deep  
core—”  
I'd say to her: “Unshroud and meet  
That Love who kissed and called thee  
Sweet!—  
Yea, come once more!”

160 "COULD I BUT WILL".

Even half-god power  
In spinning dooms

Had I, this frozen scene should flower,  
And sand-swept plains and Arctic glooms  
Should green them gay with waving leaves,  
Mid which old friends and I would walk  
With weightless feet and magic talk  
Uncounted eves.

## SHE REVISITS ALONE THE CHURCH OF HER MARRIAGE

I HAVE come to the church and chancel,  
Where all's the same!  
—Brighter and larger in my dreams  
Truly it shaped than now, meseems,  
Is its substantial frame.  
But, anyhow, I made my vow,  
Whether for praise or blame,  
Here in this church and chancel  
Where all's the same.

Where touched the check-floored chancel  
My knees and his?  
The step looks shyly at the sun,  
And says, "'Twas here the thing was done,  
For bale or else for bliss!"  
Of all those there I least was ware  
Would it be that or this  
When touched the check-floored chancel  
My knees and his!

Here in this fateful chancel  
Where all's the same,  
I thought the culminant crest of life  
Was reached when I went forth the wife,  
I was not when I came.  
Each commonplace one of my race,  
Some say, has such an aim—  
To go from a fateful chancel  
As not the same.

Here, through this hoary chancel  
Where all's the same,  
A thrill, a gaiety even, ranged  
That morning when it seemed I changed  
My nature with my name.  
Though now not fair, though gray my hair,  
He loved me, past proclaim,  
Here in this hoary chancel,  
Where all's the same.

## AT THE ENTERING OF THE NEW YEAR

### I

(OLD STYLE)

OUR songs went up and out the chimney,  
And roused the home-gone husbandmen ;  
Our allemands, our heys, pousettings,  
Our hands-across and back again,  
Sent rhythmic throbings through the casements

On to the white highway,  
Where nighted farers paused and muttered,  
“ Keep it up well, do they ! ”

The contrabasso’s measured booming  
Sped at each bar to the parish bounds,  
To shepherds at their midnight lambings,  
To stealthy poachers on their rounds ;  
And everybody caught full duly  
The notes of our delight,  
As Time unrobed the Youth of Promise  
Hailed by our sanguine sight.

## II

(NEW STYLE)

WE stand in the dusk of a pine-tree limb,  
As if to give ear to the muffled peal,  
Brought or withheld at the breeze's  
whim ;  
But our truest heed is to words that  
steal  
From the mantled ghost that looms in  
the gray,  
And seems, so far as our sense can see,  
To feature bereaved Humanity,  
As it sighs to the imminent year its  
say :—

“ O stay without, O stay without,  
Calm comely Youth, untasked, un-  
tired ;  
Though stars irradiate thee about  
Thy entrance here is undesired.  
Open the gate not, mystic one ;  
Must we avow what we would close confine?  
*With thee, good friend, we would have con-  
verse none,*  
Albeit the fault may not be thine.”

*‘December 31. During the War.*

## THEY WOULD NOT COME

I TRAVELED to where in her life-time

She'd knelt at morning prayer,  
To call her up as if there ;  
But she paid no heed to my suing,  
As though her old haunt could win not  
A thought from her spirit, or care.

I went where my friend had lectured  
The prophets in high declaim,  
That my soul's ear the same  
Full tones should catch as aforetime ;  
But silenced by gear of the Present  
Was the voice that once there came !

Where the ocean had sprayed our banquet  
I stood, to recall it as then :  
The same eluding again !  
No vision. Shows contingent  
Affrighted it further from me  
Even than from my home-den.

When I found them no responders,  
But fugitives prone to flee  
From where they had used to be,  
It vouched I had been led hither  
As by night wisps in bogland,  
And bruised the heart of me!

## AFTER A ROMANTIC DAY

THE railway bore him through  
An earthen cutting out from a  
city :

There was no scope for view,  
Though the frail light shed by a slim  
young moon  
Fell like a friendly tune.

Fell like a liquid ditty,  
And the blank lack of any charm  
Of landscape did no harm.  
The bald steep cutting, rigid, rough,  
And moon-lit, was enough  
For poetry of place : its weathered face  
Formed a convenient sheet whereon  
The visions of his mind were drawn.

## THE TWO WIVES

(SMOKER'S CLUB-STORY)

I WAITED at home all the while they  
    were boating together—

    My wife and my near neigh-  
    bour's wife :

    Till there entered a woman I loved  
        more than life,

    And we sat and sat on, and beheld the  
        uprising dark weather,

    With a sense that some mischief  
        was rife.

Tidings came that the boat had capsized,  
    and that one of the ladies

    Was drowned—which of them  
        was unknown :

    And I marvelled—my friend's wife?—  
        or was it my own

    Who had gone in such wise to the land  
        where the sun as the shade is?

    —We learnt it was *his* had so  
        gone.

Then I cried in unrest: "He is free!  
But no good is releasing  
To him as it would be to me!"  
"—But it is," said the woman I loved,  
quietly.  
"How?" I asked her. "—Because he  
has long loved me too without  
ceasing,  
And it's just the same thing,  
don't you see."

## “I KNEW A LADY”

(CLUB SONG)

I KNEW a lady when the days  
Grew long, and evenings goldened ;  
But I was not emboldened  
By her prompt eyes and winning ways.

And when old Winter nipt the haws,  
“Another’s wife I’ll be,  
And then you’ll care for me,”  
She said, “and think how sweet I was !”

And soon she shone as another’s wife :  
As such I often met her,  
And sighed, “How I regret her !  
My folly cuts me like a knife !”

And then, to-day, her husband came,  
And moaned, “Why did you flout her ?  
Well could I do without her !  
For both our burdens you are to blame !”

## A HOUSE WITH A HISTORY

THERE is a house in a city street  
Some past ones made their own ;  
Its floors were criss-crossed by their feet,  
And their babblings beat  
From ceiling to white hearth-stone.

And who are peopling its parlours now ?  
Who talk across its floor ?  
Mere freshlings are they, blank of brow,  
Who read not how  
Its prime had passed before

Their raw equipments, scenes, and says  
Afflicted its memoried face,  
That had seen every larger phase  
Of human ways  
Before these, filled the place.

172 A HOUSE WITH A HISTORY

To them that house's tale is theirs,  
No former voices call  
Aloud therein. Its aspect bears  
Their joys and cares  
Alone, from wall to wall.

## A PROCESSION OF DEAD DAYS

I SEE the ghost of a perished day ;  
I know his face, and the feel of his  
dawn :

'Twas he who took me far away  
To a spot strange and gray :  
Look at me, Day, and then pass on,  
But come again : yes, come anon !

Enters another into view ;  
His features are not cold or white,  
But rosy as a vein seen through :

Too soon he smiles adieu.  
Adieu, O ghost-day of delight ;  
But come and grace my dying sight.

Enters the day that brought the kiss :  
He brought it in his foggy hand  
To where the mumbling river is,  
And the high clematis ;  
It lent new colour to the land,  
And all the boy within me manned.

Ah, this one. Yes, I know his name,  
He is the day that wrought a shine  
Even on a precinct common and tame,  
As 'twere of purposed aim.  
He shows him as a rainbow sign  
Of promise made to me and mine.

The next stands forth in his morning  
clothes,  
And yet, despite their misty blue,  
They mark no sombre custom-growths  
That joyous living loathes,  
But a meteor act, that left in its queue  
A train of sparks my lifetime through.

I almost tremble at his nod—  
This next in train—who looks at me  
As I were slave, and he were god  
Wielding an iron rod.  
I close my eyes ; yet still is he  
In front there, looking mastery.

In the similitude of a nurse  
The phantom of the next one comes :  
I did not know what better or worse  
Chancings might bless or curse  
When his original glossed the thrums  
Of ivy, bringing that which numbs.

Yes ; trees' were turning in their sleep  
Upon their windy pillows of gray  
When he stole in. Silent his creep  
    On the grassed eastern steep. . . .  
I shall not soon forget that day,  
And what his third hour took away !

## HE FOLLOWS HIMSELF

IN a heavy time I dogged myself  
Along a louring way,  
Till my leading self to my following self  
Said : " Why do you hang on me  
So harassingly ? "

" I have watched you, Heart of mine," I  
cried,  
" So often going astray  
And leaving me, that I have pursued,  
Feeling such truancy  
Ought not to be."

He said no more, and I dogged him on  
From noon to the dun of day  
By prowling paths, until anew  
He begged : " Please turn and flee !—  
What do you see ? "

“Methinks I see a man,” said I,  
 “ Dimming his hours to gray.  
 I will not leave him while I know  
 . . . Part of myself is he  
 Who dreams such dree ! ”

“I go to my old friend’s house,” he urged,  
 “ So do not watch me, pray ! ”  
 “Well, I will leave you in peace,” said I,  
 “ Though of this poignancy  
 You should fight free :

“ Your friend, O other me, is dead ;  
 You know not what you say.”

—“That do I ! And at his green-grassed  
 door  
 By night’s bright galaxy  
 I bend a knee.”

—The yew-plumes moved like mockers’  
 beards,  
 Though only boughs were they,  
 And I seemed to go ; yet still was there,  
 And am, and there haunt we  
 Thus bootlessly.

## THE SINGING WOMAN

THERE was a singing woman  
Came riding across the mead  
At the time of the mild May weather,  
Tameless, tireless ;  
This song she sung : "I am fair, I am  
young!"  
And many turned to heed.

And the same singing woman  
Sat crooning in her need  
At the time of the winter weather ;  
Friendless, fireless,  
She sang this song : "Life, thou'rt too  
long!"  
And there was none to heed.

## WITHOUT, NOT WITHIN HER

IT was what you bore with you, Woman,  
Not only were,  
That throned you from all else human,  
However fair !

It was that strange freshness you carried  
Into a soul  
Whereon no thought of yours tarried  
Two moments at all.

And out from his spirit flew death,  
And bale, and ban,  
Like the corn-chaff under the breath  
Of the winnowing-fan.

## “O I WON’T LEAD A HOMELY LIFE”

*(To an old air)*

“O I won’t lead a homely life  
As father’s Jack and mother’s Jill,  
But I will be a fiddler’s wife,  
With music mine at will !  
    Just a little tune,  
    Another one soon,  
    As I merrily fling my fill !”

And she became a fiddler’s Dear,  
And merry all day she strove to be ;  
And he played and played afar and near,  
    But never at home played he  
    Any little tune  
    Or late or soon ;  
    And sunk and sad was she !

## IN THE SMALL HOURS

I LAY in my bed and fiddled  
With a dreamland viol and bow,,  
And the tunes flew back to my fingers  
I had melodied years ago.

It was two or three in the morning  
When I fancy-fiddled so  
Long reels and country-dances,  
And hornpipes swift and slow.

And soon anon came crossing  
The chamber in the gray  
Figures of jigging fieldfolk—  
Saviours of corn and hay—  
To the air of “ Haste to the Wedding,”  
As after a wedding-day ;  
Yea, up and down the middle  
In windless whirls went they !

There danced the bride and bridegroom,  
And couples in a train,  
Gay partners time and travail  
Had longwhiles stilled amain ! . . .

182 IN THE SMALL HOURS

It seemed a thing for weeping  
To find, at slumber's wane  
And morning's sly increeping,  
That Now, not Then, held reign.

## THE LITTLE OLD TABLE

CREAK, little wood thing, creak,  
When I touch you with elbow or  
knee;  
That is the way you speak  
Of one who gave you to me!

You, little table, she brought—  
Brought me with her own hand,  
As she looked at me with a thought  
That I did not understand.

—Whoever owns it anon,  
And hears it, will never know  
What a history hangs upon  
This creak from long ago.

## VAGG HOLLOW

Vagg Hollow is a marshy spot on the old Roman Road near Ilchester, where "things" are seen. Merchandise was formerly fetched inland from the canal-boats at Load-Bridge by waggons this way.

"WHAT do you see in Vagg Hollow,  
Little boy, when you go  
In the morning at five on your lonely  
drive?"

"—I see men's souls, who follow  
Till we've passed where the road lies low,  
When they vanish at our creaking !

"They are like white faces speaking  
Beside and behind the waggon—  
One just as father's was when here.  
The waggoner drinks from his flagon,  
(Or he'd flinch when the Hollow is near)  
But he does not give me any.

"Sometimes the faces are many ;  
But I walk along by the horses,  
He asleep on the straw as we jog ;  
And I hear the loud water-courses,  
And the drops from the trees in the fog,  
And watch till the day is breaking,

“And the wind out by Tintinhull waking;  
I hear in it father’s call  
As he called when I saw him dying,  
And he sat by the fire last Fall,  
And mother stood by sighing;  
But I’m not afraid at all!”

## THE DREAM IS—WHICH?

I AM laughing by the brook with her,  
Splashed in its tumbling stir ;  
And then it is a blankness looms  
As if I walked not there,  
Nor she, but found me in haggard rooms,  
And treading a lonely stair.

With radiant cheeks and rapid eyes  
We sit where none espies ;  
Till a harsh change comes edging in  
As no such scene were there,  
But winter, and I were bent and thin,  
And cinder-gray my hair.

We dance in heys around the hall,  
Weightless as thistleball ;  
And then a curtain drops between,  
As if I danced not there,  
But wandered through a mounded green  
To find her, I knew where.

*March 1913.*

## THE COUNTRY WEDDING

(A FIDDLER'S STORY)

LITTLE fogs were gathered in every hollow,  
But the purple hillocks enjoyed fine weather  
As we marched with our fiddles over the heather  
—How it comes back!—to their wedding that day.

Our getting there brought our neighbours and all, O!  
Till, two and two, the couples stood ready.  
And her father said: "Souls, for God's sake, be steady!"  
And we strung up our fiddles, and sounded out "A."

## 188 THE COUNTRY WEDDING

The groomsman he stared,' and said,  
" You must follow!"  
But we'd gone to fiddle in front of the  
party,  
(Our feelings as friends being true and  
hearty)  
And fiddle in front we did—all the way.

Yes, from their door by Mill-tail-Shallow,  
And up Styles-Lane, and by Front-Street  
houses,  
Where stood maids, bachelors, and spouses,  
Who cheered the songs that we knew how  
to play.

I bowed the treble before her father,  
Michael the tenor in front of the lady,  
The bass-viol Reub—and right well played  
he!—  
The serpent Jim ; ay, to church and back.

I thought the bridegroom was flurried  
rather,  
As we kept up the tune outside the  
chancel.  
While they were swearing things none can  
cancel  
Inside the walls to our drumstick's whack.

“Too gay!” she pleaded. “Clouds may gather,  
And sorrow come.” But she gave in,  
laughing,  
And by supper-time when we’d got to the  
quaffing  
Her fears were forgot, and her smiles  
weren’t slack.

A grand wedding ‘twas! And what would follow  
We never thought. Or that we should have buried her  
On the same day with the man that married her,  
A day like the first, half hazy, half clear.

Yes: little fogs were in every hollow,  
Though the purple hillocks enjoyed fine weather,  
When we went to play ‘em to church together,  
And carried ‘em there in an after year.

## FIRST OR LAST

(SONG)

I F grief come early  
I Joy comes late,  
If joy come early  
Grief will wait ;  
Aye, my dear and tender !

Wise ones joy them early  
While the cheeks are red,  
Banish grief till surly  
Time has dulled their dread.

And joy being ours  
Ere youth has flown,  
The later hours  
May find us gone ;  
Aye, my dear and tender !

## LONELY DAYS

LONELY her fate was,  
Environed from sight . . .  
In the house where the gate was  
Past finding at night.  
None there to share it,  
No one to tell :  
Long she'd to bear it,  
And bore it well.

Elsewhere just so she  
Spent many a day ;  
Wishing to go she  
Continued to stay.  
And people without  
Basked warm in the air,  
But none sought her out,  
Or knew she was there.  
Even birthdays were passed so,  
Sunny and shady :  
Years did it last so  
For this sad lady.

Never declaring it,  
No one to tell,  
Still she kept bearing it-  
Bore it well.

The days grew chillier,  
And then she went  
To a city, familiar  
In years forespent,  
When she walked gaily  
Far to and fro,  
But now, moving frailly,  
Could nowhere go.  
The cheerful colour  
Of houses she'd known  
Had died to a duller  
And dingier tone.  
Streets were now noisy  
Where once had rolled  
A few quiet coaches,  
Or citizens strolled.  
Through the party-wall  
Of the memoried spot  
They danced at a ball  
Who recalled her not.  
Tramlines lay crossing  
Once gravelled slopes,  
Metal rods clanked,  
And electric ropes.

So she endured it all,  
Thin, thinner wrought,  
Until time cured it all,  
And she knew nought.

Versified from a Diary.

## “WHAT DID IT MEAN?”

WHAT did it mean that noontide,  
when  
You bade me pluck the flower  
Within the other woman's bower,  
Whom I knew nought of then?

I thought the flower blushed deeplier—aye,  
And as I drew its stalk to me  
It seemed to breathe: “I am, I see,  
Made use of in a human play.”

And while I plucked, upstarted sheer  
As phantom from the pane thereby  
A corpse-like countenance, with eye  
That iced me by its baleful peer—  
Silent, as from a bier. . . .

When I came back your face had changed,  
It was no face for me;  
O did it speak of hearts estranged,  
And deadly rivalry

In times before  
I darked your door,  
To seise me of  
Mere second love,  
Which still the haunting first deranged?

## AT THE DINNER-TABLE

I SAT at dinner in my prime,  
And glimpsed my face in the side-  
board-glass,  
And started as if I had seen a crime,  
And prayed the ghastly show might pass.

Wrenched wrinkled features met my sight,  
Grinning back to me as my own ;  
I well-nigh fainted with affright  
At finding me a haggard crone.

My husband laughed. He had slyly set  
A warping mirror there, in whim  
To startle me. My eyes grew wet ;  
I spoke not all the eve to him.

He was sorry, he said, for what he had  
done,  
And took away the distorting glass,  
Uncovering the accustomed one ;  
And so it ended ? No, alas,

## AT THE DINNER-TABLE 197

Fifty years later, when he died,  
I sat me in the selfsame chair,  
Thinking of him. Till, weary-eyed,  
I saw the sideboard facing there ;

And from its mirror looked the lean  
Thing I'd become, each wrinkle and score  
The image of me that I had seen  
In jest there fifty years before.

## THE MARBLE TABLET

THERE it stands, though alas, what a  
little of her  
Shows in its cold white look !  
Not her glance, glide, or smile ; not a  
tittle of her  
Voice like the purl of a brook ;  
Not her thoughts, that you read like  
a book.

It may stand for her once in November  
When first she breathed, witless of all ;  
Or in heavy years she would remember  
When circumstance held her in thrall ;  
Or at last, when she answered her  
call !

Nothing more. The still marble, date-  
graven,  
Gives all that it can, tersely lined ;  
That one has at length found the haven  
Which every one other will find ;  
With silence on what shone behind.

ST. JULIOT: *September 8, 1916.*

## THE MASTER AND THE LEAVES

### I

WE are budding, Master, budding,  
We of your favourite tree ;  
March drought and April flooding  
Arouse us merrily,  
Our stemlets newly studding ;  
And yet you do not see !

### II

We are fully woven for summer  
In stuff of limpest green,  
The twitterer and the hummer  
Here rest of nights, unseen,  
While like a long-roll drummer  
The nightjar thrills the treen.

## III

We are turning yellow, Master,  
And next we are turning red,  
And faster then and faster  
Shall seek our rooty bed,  
All wasted in disaster !  
But you lift not your head.

## IV

—“ I mark your early going,  
And that you'll soon be clay,  
I have seen your summer showing  
As in my youthful day ;  
But why I seem unknowing  
Is too sunk in to say ! ”

1917.

## LAST WORDS TO A DUMB FRIEND

PET was never mourned as you,  
Purrer of the spotless hue,  
Plumy tail, and wistful gaze  
While you humoured our queer ways,  
Or outshriilled your morning call  
Up the stairs and through the hall—  
Foot suspended in its fall—  
While, expectant, you would stand  
Arched, to meet the stroking hand ;  
Till your way you chose to wend  
Yonder, to your tragic end.

Never another pet for me !  
Let your place all vacant be ;  
Better blankness day by day  
Than companion torn away.  
Better bid his memory fade,  
Better blot each mark he made,

Selfishly escape distress  
By contrived forgetfulness,  
Than preserve his prints to make  
Every morn and eve an ache.

From the chair whereon he sat  
Sweep his fur, nor wince thereat ;  
Rake his little pathways out  
Mid the bushes roundabout ;  
Smooth away his talons' mark  
From the claw-worn pine-tree bark,  
Where he climbed as dusk embrowned,  
Waiting us who loitered round.

Strange it is this speechless thing,  
Subject to our mastering,  
Subject for his life and food  
To our gift, and time, and mood ;  
Timid pensioner of us Powers,  
His existence ruled by ours,  
Should—by crossing at a breath  
Into safe and shielded death,  
By the merely taking hence  
Of his insignificance—  
Loom as largened to the sense,  
Shape as part, above man's will,  
Of the Imperturbable.

As a prisoner, flight debarred,  
Exercising in a yard, .

Still retain I, troubled, shaken,  
Mean estate, by him forsaken ;  
And this home, which scarcely took  
Impress from his little look,  
By his faring to the Dim  
Grows all eloquent of him.

Housemate, I can think you still  
Bounding to the window-sill,  
Over which I vaguely see  
Your small mound beneath the tree,  
Showing in the autumn shade  
That you moulder where you played.

*October 2, 1904.*

## A DRIZZLING EASTER MORNING

AND he is risen? Well, be it so. . . .  
And still the pensive lands complain,  
And dead men wait as long ago,  
As if, much doubting, they would know  
What they are ransomed from, before  
They pass again their sheltering door.

I stand amid them in the rain,  
While blusters vex the yew and vane;  
And on the road the weary wain  
Plods forward, laden heavily;  
And toilers with their aches are fain  
For endless rest—though risen is he.

## ON ONE WHO LIVED AND DIED WHERE HE WAS BORN

WHEN a night in November  
Blew forth its bleared airs  
An infant descended  
His birth-chamber stairs  
For the very first time,  
At the still, midnight chime ;  
All unapprehended  
His mission, his aim.—  
Thus, first, one November,  
An infant descended  
The stairs.

On a night in November  
Of weariful cares,  
A frail aged figure  
Ascended those stairs  
For the very last time :  
All gone his life's prime,  
All vanished his vigour,

And fine, forceful frame :  
Thus, last, one November  
Ascended that figure  
Upstairs.

On those nights in November—  
Apart eighty years—  
The babe and the bent one  
Who traversed those stairs  
From the early first time  
To the last feeble climb—  
That fresh and that spent one—  
Were even the same :  
Yea, who passed in November  
As infant, as bent one,  
Those stairs.

Wise child of November !  
From birth to blanched hairs  
Descending, ascending,  
Wealth-wantless, those stairs ;  
Who saw quick in time  
As a vain pantomime  
Life's tending, its ending,  
The worth of its fame.  
Wise child of November,  
Descending, ascending  
Those stairs !

## THE SECOND NIGHT

(BALLAD)

I MISSED one night, but the next I  
went;

It was gusty above, and clear;  
She was there, with the look of one ill-  
content,  
And said: "Do not come near!"

—"I am sorry last night to have failed  
you here,  
And now I have travelled all day;  
And it's long rowing back to the West-  
Hoe Pier,  
So brief must be my stay."

—"O man of mystery, why not say  
Out plain to me all you mean?  
Why you missed last night, and must now  
away  
Is—another has come between!"

—“O woman so mocking in mood and  
mien,  
So be it!” I replied :  
“And if I am due at a differing scene  
Before the dark has died,

“ ‘Tis that, unresting, to wander wide  
Has ever been my plight,  
And at least I have met you at Cremyll  
side  
If not last eve, to-night.”

—“ You get small rest—that read I quite ;  
And so do I, maybe ;  
Though there’s a rest hid safe from sight  
Elsewhere awaiting me ! ”

A mad star crossed the sky to the sea,  
Wasting in sparks as it streamed,  
And when I looked to where stood she  
She had changed, much changed, it  
seemed :

The sparks of the star in her pupils  
gleamed,  
She was vague as a vapour now,  
And ere of its meaning I had dreamed  
She’d vanished—I knew not how.

I stood on, long ; each cliff-top bough,  
Like a cynic nodding there,  
Moved up and down, though no man's  
brow  
But mine met the wayward air.

Still stood I, wholly unaware  
Of what had come to pass,  
Or had brought the secret of my new Fair  
To my old Love, alas !

I went down then by crag and grass  
To the boat wherein I had come.  
Said the man with the oars : " This news  
of the lass  
Of Edgcumbe, is sharp for some !

" Yes : found this daybreak, stiff and numb  
On the shore here, whither she'd sped  
To meet her lover last night in the glum,  
And he came not, 'tis said.

" And she leapt down, heart-hit. Pity  
she's dead :  
So much for the faithful-bent ! " . . .  
I looked, and again a star overhead  
Shot through the firmament.

## SHE WHO SAW NOT

“ DID you see something within  
the house  
That made me call you before the red  
sunsetting?  
Something that all this common scene  
endows  
With a richened impress there can be no  
forgetting?”

“—I have found nothing to see  
therein,  
O Sage, that should have made you urge  
me to enter,  
Nothing to fire the soul, or the sense to  
win :  
I rate you as a rare misrepresenter!”

“—Go anew, Lady,—in by the  
right. . . .  
Well : why does your face not shine like  
the face of Moses ?”

“—I found no moving thing there save  
the light  
And shadow flung on the wall by the  
outside roses.”

“—Go yet once more, pray. Look  
on a seat.”

“—I go. . . . O Sage, it’s only a man  
that sits there  
With eyes on the sun. Mute,—average  
head to feet.”

“—No more?”—“No more. Just one  
the place befits there,

“As the rays reach in through the  
open door,  
And he looks at his hand, and the sun  
glows through his fingers,  
While he’s thinking thoughts whose tenour  
is no more  
To me than the swaying rose-tree shade  
that lingers.”

No more. And years drew on and on  
Till no sun came, dank fogs the house  
enfolding;  
And she saw inside, when the form in the  
flesh had gone,  
As a vision what she had missed when the  
real beholding.

## THE OLD WORKMAN

“WHY are you so bent down before  
your time,  
Old mason? Many have not left their  
prime  
So far behind at your age, and can still  
Stand full upright at will.”

He pointed to the mansion-front hard by,  
And to the stones of the quoin against the  
sky;  
“Those upper blocks,” he said, “that there  
you see,  
It was that ruined me.”

There stood in the air up to the parapet  
Crowning the corner height, the stones  
as set  
By him—ashlar whereon the gales might  
drum  
For centuries to come.

“I carried them up,” he said, “by a ladder  
there ;  
The last was as big a load as I could bear ;  
But on I heaved ; and something in my  
back  
Moved, as 'twere with a crack.

“So I got crookt. I never lost that sprain ;  
And those who live there, walled from  
wind and rain  
By freestone that I lifted, do not know  
That my life's ache came so.

“They don't know me, or even know my  
name,  
But good I think it, somehow, all the same  
To have kept 'em safe from harm, and  
right and tight,  
Though it has broke me quite.

“Yes ; that I fixed it firm up there I am  
proud,  
Facing the hail and snow and sun and  
cloud,  
And to stand storms for ages, beating  
round  
When I lie underground.”

## THE SAILOR'S MOTHER

“ O WHENCE do you come,  
Figure in the night-fog that  
chills me numb?”

“ I come to you across from my house up  
there,  
And I don't mind the brine-mist clinging  
to me  
That blows from the quay,  
For I heard him in my chamber, and  
thought you unaware.”

“ But what did you hear,  
That brought you blindly knocking in this  
middle-watch so drear ? ”

“ My sailor son's voice as 'twere calling at  
your door,  
And I don't mind my bare feet clammy on  
the stones,

And the blight to my bones,  
For he only knows of *this* house I lived  
in before."

" Nobody's nigh,  
Woman like a skeleton, with socket-sunk  
eye."

" Ah—nobody's nigh! And my life is  
drearisome,  
And this is the old home we loved in many  
a day

Before he went away;  
And the salt fog mops me. And nobody's  
come!"

From "To Please his Wife."

## OUTSIDE THE CASEMENT

(A REMINISCENCE OF THE WAR)

WE sat in the room  
And praised her whom  
We saw in the portico-shade outside :  
She could not hear  
What was said of her,  
But smiled, for its purport we did not hide.

Then in was brought  
That message, fraught  
With evil fortune for her out there,  
Whom we loved that day  
More than any could say,  
And would fain have fenced from a waft  
of care.

And the question pressed  
Like lead on each breast,

## OUTSIDE THE CASEMENT 217

Should we cloak the tidings, or call her  
and tell ?  
It was too intense  
A choice for our sense,  
As we pondered and watched her we loved  
so well.

Yea, spirit failed us  
At what assailed us ;  
How long, while seeing what soon must  
come,  
Should we counterfeit  
No knowledge of it,  
And stay the stroke that would blanch and  
numb ?

And thus, before  
For evermore  
Joy left her, we practised to beguile  
Her innocence when  
She now and again  
Looked in, and smiled us another smile.

## THE PASSER-BY

(L. H. RECALLS HER ROMANCE)

HE used to pass, well-trimmed and  
brushed,  
My window every day,  
And when I smiled on him he blushed,  
That youth, quite as a girl might ; aye,  
In the shyest way.

Thus often did he pass hereby,  
That youth of bounding gait,  
Until the one who blushed was I,  
And he became, as here I sate,  
My joy, my fate.

And now he passes by no more,  
That youth I loved too true !  
I grieve should he, as here of yore,  
Pass elsewhere, seated in his view,  
Some maiden new ! .

If such should be, alas for her !  
    He'll make her feel him dear,  
Become her daily comforter,  
Then tire him of her beauteous gear,  
    And disappear !

## “I WAS THE MIDMOST”

I WAS the midmost of my world  
When first I frisked me free,  
For though within its circuit gleamed  
But a small company,  
And I was immature, they seemed  
To bend their looks on me.

She was the midmost of my world  
When I went further forth,  
And hence it was that, whether I turned  
To south, east, west, or north,  
Beams of an all-day Polestar burned  
From that new axe of earth.

Where now is midmost in my world?  
I trace it not at all :  
No midmost shows it here, or there,  
When wistful voices call  
“We are fain! We are fain!” from  
everywhere  
On Earth’s bewildering ball!

## A SOUND IN THE NIGHT

(WOODSFORD CASTLE: 17—)

“ **W**HAT do I catch upon the night-wind, husband?—  
What is it sounds in this house so eerily?  
It seems to be a woman’s voice: each little  
while I hear it,  
And it much troubles me! ”

“ ‘Tis but the eaves dripping down upon  
the plinth-slopes:  
Letting fancies worry thee!—sure ‘tis a  
foolish thing,  
When we were on’y coupled half-an-hour  
before the noontide,  
And now it’s but evening.”

“ Yet seems it still a woman’s voice outside  
the castle, husband,  
And ‘tis cold to-night, and rain beats, and  
this is a lonely place.  
Didst thou fathom much of womankind in  
travel or adventure  
Ere ever thou sawest my face? ”

222 A SOUND IN THE NIGHT

“ It may be a tree, bride, that rubs his  
    arms acrosswise,  
If it is not the eaves-drip upon the lower  
    slopes,  
Or the river at the bend, where it whirls  
    about the hatches  
        Like a creature that sighs and mopes.”

“ Yet it still seems to me like the crying  
    of a woman,  
And it saddens me much that so piteous  
    a sound  
On this my bridal night when I would get  
    agone from sorrow  
        Should so ghost-like wander round!”

“ To satisfy thee, Love, I will strike the  
    flint-and-steel, then,  
And set the rush-candle up, and undo the  
    door,  
And take the new horn-lantern that we  
    bought upon our journey,  
        And throw the light over the moor.”

He struck a light, and breeched and booted  
    in the further chamber,  
And lit the new horn-lantern and went  
    from her sight,

And vanished down the turret ; and she  
    heard him pass the postern,  
And go out into the night.

She listened as she lay, till she heard his  
    step returning,  
And his voice as he unclothed him :  
    “ ‘Twas nothing, as I said,  
But the nor'-west wind a-blowing from the  
    moor ath'art the river,  
And the tree that taps the gargoyle-  
    head.”

“ Nay, husband, you perplex me ; for if  
    the noise I heard here,  
Awaking me from sleep so, were but as  
    you avow,  
The rain-fall, and the wind, and the tree-  
    bough, and the river,  
Why is it silent now ?

“ And why is thy hand and thy clasping  
    arm so shaking,  
And thy sleeve and tags of hair so muddy  
    and so wet,  
And why feel I thy heart a-thumping every  
    time thou kispest me,  
And thy breath as if hard to get ? ”

## 224 A SOUND IN THE NIGHT

He lay there in silence for a while, still  
quickly breathing,  
Then started up and walked about the  
room resentfully :  
“ O woman, witch, whom I, in sooth,  
against my will have wedded,  
Why castedst thou thy spells on me ?

“ There was one I loved once : the cry  
you heard was her cry :  
She came to me to-night, and her plight  
was passing sore,  
As no woman. . . . Yea, and it was e'en  
the cry you heard, wife,  
But she will cry no more !

“ And now I can't abide thee : this place,  
it hath a curse on't,  
This farmstead once a castle : I'll get  
me straight away ! ”  
He dressed this time in darkness, unspeak-  
ing, as she listened,  
And went ere the dawn turned day.

They found a woman's body at a spot  
called Rocky Shallow,  
Where the Froom stream curves amid the  
moorland, washed aground,

And they searched about for him, the  
yeoman, who had darkly known  
her,  
But he could not be found.

And the bride left for good-and-all the  
farmstead once a castle,  
And in a county far away lives, mourns,  
and sleeps alone,  
And thinks in windy weather that she  
hears a woman crying,  
And sometimes an infant's moan.

## ON A DISCOVERED CURL OF HAIR

WHEN your soft welcomings were  
said,  
This curl was waving on your head,  
And when we walked where breakers  
dinned  
It sported in the sun and wind,  
And when I had won your words of grace  
It brushed and clung about my face.  
Then, to abate the misery  
Of absentness, you gave it me.

Where are its fellows now? Ah, they  
For brightest brown have donned a gray,  
And gone into a caverned ark,  
Ever unopened, always dark!

Yet this one curl, untouched of time,  
Beams with live brown as in its prime,  
So that it seems I even could now  
Restore it to the living brow  
By bearing down the western road  
Till I had reached your old abode.

*February 1913.*

## AN OLD LIKENESS

(RECALLING R. T.)

WHO would have thought  
That, not having missed her  
Talks, tears, laughter  
In absence, or sought  
To recall for so long  
Her gamut of song ;  
Or ever to waft her  
Signal of aught  
That she, fancy-fanned,  
Would well understand,  
I should have kissed her  
Picture when scanned  
Yawning years after !

Yet, seeing her poor  
Dim-outlined form  
Chancewise at night-time,  
Some old allure  
Came on me, warm,  
Fresh, pleadful, pure,

As in that bright time  
At a far season  
Of love and unreason,  
And took me by storm  
Here in this blight-time !

And thus it arose  
That, yawning years after  
Our early flows  
Of wit and laughter,  
And framing of rhymes  
At idle times,  
At sight of her painting,  
Though she lies cold  
In churchyard mould,  
I took its feinting  
As real, and kissed it,  
As if I had wist it  
Herself of old.

## HER APOTHEOSIS

“ Secretum meum mihi ”

(FADED WOMAN'S SONG)

THERE was a spell of leisure,  
No record vouches when ;  
With honours, praises, pleasure  
To womankind from men.

But no such lures bewitched me,  
No hand was stretched to raise,  
No gracious gifts enriched me,  
No voices sang my praise.

Yet an iris at that season  
Amid the accustomed slight  
From denseness, dull unreason,  
Ringed me with living light.

## “SACRED TO THE MEMORY”

(MARY H.)

THAT “Sacred to the Memory”  
Is clearly carven there I own,  
And all may think that on the stone  
The words have been inscribed by me  
In bare conventionality.

They know not and will never know  
That my full script is not confined  
To that stone space, but stands deep lined  
Upon the landscape high and low  
Wherein she made such worthy show.

## TO A WELL-NAMED DWELLING

**G**LAD old house of lichened stonework,  
What I owed you in my lone work,  
    Noon and night !  
Whensoever faint or ailing,  
Letting go my grasp and failing,  
    You lent light.

How by that fair title came you ?  
Did some forward eye so name you  
    Knowing that one,  
Sauntering down his century blindly,  
Would remark your sound, so kindly,  
    And be won ?

Smile in sunlight, sleep in moonlight,  
Bask in April, May, and Junc-light,  
    Zephyr-fanned ;  
Let your chambers show no sorrow,  
Blanching day, or stuporing morrow,  
    While they stand.

## THE WHIPPER-IN

“ **M**Y father was the whipper-in,—  
Is still—if I’m not misled?  
And now I see, where the hedge is thin,  
A little spot of red ;  
Surely it is my father  
Going to the kennel-shed !

“ I cursed and fought my father—aye,  
And sailed to a foreign land ;  
And feeling sorry, I’m back, to stay,  
Please God, as his helping hand.  
Surely it is my father  
Near where the kennels stand ? ”

“ —True. Whipper-in he used to be  
For twenty years or more ;  
And you did go away to sea  
As youths have done before.  
Yes, oddly enough that red there  
Is the very coat he wore.

“ But he—he’s dead ; was thrown somehow,  
And gave his back a crick,  
And though that is his coat, ’tis now  
The scarecrow of a rick ;  
You’ll see when you get nearer—  
’Tis spread out on a stick.

“ You see, when all had settled down  
Your mother’s things were sold,  
And she went back to her own town,  
And the coat, ate out with mould,  
Is now used by the farmer  
For scaring, as ’tis old.”

## A MILITARY APPOINTMENT

(SCHERZANDO)

“SO back you have come from the town,  
Nan, dear !  
And have you seen him there, or near—  
That soldier of mine—  
Who long since promised to meet me  
here ?”

“—O yes, Nell : from the town I come,  
And have seen your lover on sick-leave  
home—  
That soldier of yours—  
Who swore to meet you, or Strikt-him-  
dumb ;

“ But has kept himself of late away ;  
Yet,—in short, he’s coming, I heard him  
say—  
That lover of yours—  
To this very spot on this very day.”

A MILITARY APPOINTMENT 235

“—Then I'll wait, I'll wait, through wet or  
dry !  
I'll give him a goblet brimming high—  
This lover of mine—  
And not of complaint one word or sigh !”

“—Nell, him I have chanced so much to  
see,  
That—he has grown the lover of me !—  
That lover of yours—  
And it's here our meeting is planned to be.”

## THE MILESTONE BY THE RABBIT-BURROW

(ON YELL'HAM HILL)

**I**N my loamy nook  
As I dig my hole  
I observe men look  
At a stone, and sigh  
As they pass it by  
To some far goal.

Something it says  
To their glancing eyes  
That must distress  
The frail and lame,  
And the strong of frame  
Gladden or surprise.

Do signs on its face  
Declare how far  
Feet have to trace  
Before they gain  
Some blest champaign  
Where no gins are?

## THE LAMENT OF THE LOOKING-GLASS

WORDS from the mirror softly pass  
To the curtains with a sigh :  
“ Why should I trouble again to glass  
These smileless things hard by,  
Since she I pleasured once, alas,  
Is now no longer nigh ! ”

“ I’ve imaged shadows of coursing cloud,  
And of the plying limb  
On the pensive pine when the air is loud  
With its aerial hymn ;  
But never do they make me proud  
To catch them within my rim ! ”

“ I flash back phantoms of the night  
That sometimes flit by me,  
I echo roses red and white—  
The loveliest blooms that be—  
But now I never hold to sight  
So sweet a flower as she.”

## CROSS-CURRENTS

THEY parted — a pallid, trembling  
pair,  
And rushing down the lane  
He left her lonely near me there;  
—I asked her of their pain.

“ It is for ever,” at length she said,  
“ His friends have schemed it so,  
That the long-purposed day to wed  
Never shall we two know.”

“ In such a cruel case,” said I,  
“ Love will contrive a course?”  
“ —Well, no . . . A thing may underlie,  
Which robs that of its force;

“ A thing I could not tell him of,  
Though all the year I have tried;  
This: never could I have given him love,  
Even had I been his bride.

“ So, when his kinsfolk stop the way  
Point-blank, there could not be  
A happening in the world to-day  
More opportune for me !

“ Yet hear—no doubt to your surprise—  
I am sorry, for his sake,  
That I have escaped the sacrifice  
I was prepared to make ! ”

## THE OLD NEIGHBOUR AND THE NEW

"TWAS to greet the new rector I called  
here,  
But in the arm-chair I see  
My old friend, for long years installed  
here,  
Who palely nods to me.

The new man explains what he's planning  
In a smart and cheerful tone,  
And I listen, the while that I'm scanning  
The figure behind his own.

The newcomer urges things on me ;  
I return a vague smile thereto,  
The olden face gazing upon me  
Just as it used to do !

And on leaving I scarcely remember  
Which neighbour to-day I have seen,  
The one carried out in September,  
Or him who but entered yestreen.

## THE CHOSEN

*Ἄτινά ἔστιν ἀλληγορούμενα*

“A WOMAN for whom great gods  
might strive!”

I said, and kissed her there :  
And then I thought of the other five,  
    And of how charms outwear.

I thought of the first with her eating eyes,  
And I thought of the second with hers,  
    green-gray,  
And I thought of the third, experienced,  
    wise,  
And I thought of the fourth who sang all  
    day.

And I thought of the fifth, whom I'd called  
    a jade,  
And I thought of them all, tear-  
    fraught ;  
And that each had shown her a passable  
    maid,  
Yet not of the favour sought.

So I traced these words on the bark of a beech,  
Just at the falling of the mast :  
"After scanning five ; yes, each and each,  
I've found the woman desired—at last ! "

"—I feel a strange benumbing spell,  
As one ill-wished ! " said she.  
And soon it seemed that something fell  
Was starving her love for me.

"I feel some curse. O, *five* were there ? "  
And wanly she swerved, and went away.  
I followed sick : night numbed the air,  
And dark the mournful moorland lay.

I cried : "O darling, turn your head ! "  
But never her face I viewed ;  
"O turn, O turn ! " again I said,  
And miserably pursued.

At length I came to a Christ-cross stone  
Which she had passed without discern ;  
And I knelt upon the leaves there strown,  
And prayed aloud that she might turn.

I rose, and looked ; and turn she did ;  
I cried, " My heart revives ! "  
" Look more, " she said. I looked as bid ;  
Her face was all the five's.

All the five women, clear come back,  
I saw in her—with her made one,  
The while she drooped upon the track,  
And her frail term seemed well-nigh run.

She'd half forgot me in her change ;  
“ Who are you ? Won't you say  
Who you may be, you man so strange,  
Following since yesterday ? ”

I took the composite form she was,  
And carried her to an arbour small,  
Not passion-moved, but even because  
In one I could atone to all.

And there she lies, and there I tend,  
Till my life's threads unwind,  
A various womanhood in blend—  
Not one, but all combined.

## THE INSCRIPTION

(A TALE)

SIR JOHN was entombed, and the crypt  
        was closed, and she,  
Like a soul that could meet no more the  
        sight of the sun,  
Inclined her in weepings and prayings  
        continually,  
As his widowed one.

And to pleasure her in her sorrow, and fix  
his name  
As a memory Time's fierce frost should  
never kill,  
She caused to be richly chased a brass to  
his fame,  
Which should link them still;

For she bonded her name with his own  
on the brazen page,  
As if dead and interred there with him,  
and cold, and numb,

(Omitting the day of her dying and year  
of her age  
Till her end should come ;)

And implored good people to pray “~~Of~~  
~~their Chartyre~~  
~~For these twaine Soules,~~”—yea, she who  
did last remain  
Forgoing Heaven’s bliss if ever with  
spouse should she  
Again have lain.

Even there, as it first was set, you may  
see it now,  
Writ in quaint Church text, with the date  
of her death left bare,  
In the aged Estminster aisle, where the  
folk yet bow  
Themselves in prayer.

Thereafter some years slid, till there  
came a day  
When it slowly began to be marked of the  
standers-by  
That she would regard the brass, and  
would bend away  
With a drooping sigh.

Now the lady was fair as any the eye  
might scan  
Through a summer day of roving—a type  
at whose lip  
Despite her maturing seasons, no meet  
man  
Would be loth to sip.

And her heart was stirred with a lightning  
love to its pith  
For a newcomer who, while less in years,  
was one  
Full eager and able to make her his own  
forthwith,  
Restrained of none.

But she answered Nay, death-white ; and  
still as he urged  
She adversely spake, overmuch as she  
loved the while,  
Till he pressed for why, and she led with  
the face of one scourged  
To the neighbouring aisle,

And showed him the words, ever gleaming  
upon her pew,  
Memorizing her there as the knight's  
eternal wife,  
Or falsing such, debarred inheritance due  
Of celestial life.

He blenched, and reproached her that one  
yet undeceased  
Should bury her future—that future which  
none can spell;  
And she wept, and purposed anon to  
inquire of the priest  
If the price were hell

Of her wedding in face of the record.  
Her lover agreed,  
And they parted before the brass with a  
shudderful kiss,  
For it seemed to flash out on their impulse  
of passionate need,  
“Mock ye not this!”

Well, the priest, whom more perceptions  
moved than one,  
Said she erred at the first to have written  
as if she were dead  
Her name and adjuration; but since it  
was done  
Nought could be said

Save that she must abide by the pledge,  
for the peace of her soul,  
And so, by her life, maintain the apostrophe  
good,  
If she wished anon to reach the coveted goal  
Of beatitude.

To erase from the consecrate text her  
prayer as there prayed  
Would aver that, since earth's joys most  
drew her, past doubt,  
Friends' prayers for her joy above by  
Jesu's aid  
Could be done without.

Moreover she thought of the laughter, the  
shrug, the jibe  
That would rise at her back in the nave  
when she should pass  
As another's avowed by the words she had  
chosen to inscribe  
On the changeless brass.

And so for months she replied to her Love :  
"No, no";  
While sorrow was gnawing her beauties  
ever and more,  
Till he, long-suffering and weary, grew  
to show  
Less warmth than before.

And, after an absence, wrote words absolute :  
That he gave her till Midsummer morn to  
make her mind clear ;  
And that if, by then, she had not said Yea  
to his suit,  
He should wed elsewhere.

Thence on, at unwonted times through the  
lengthening days  
She was seen in the church—at dawn, or  
when the sun dipt  
And the moon rose, standing with hands  
joined, blank of gaze,  
Before the script.

She thinned as he came not ; shrank like  
a creature that cowers  
As summer drew nearer ; but still had not  
promised to wed,  
When, just at the zenith of June, in the  
still night hours,  
She was missed from her bed.

“The church!” they whispered with qualms ;  
“where often she sits.”  
They found her : facing the brass there,  
else seeing none,  
But feeling the words with her finger,  
gibbering in fits ;  
And she knew them not one.

And so she remained, in her handmaids’  
charge ; late, soon,  
Tracing words in the air with her finger,  
as seen that night—

Those incised on the brass—till at length  
unwatched one noon,  
She vanished from sight.

And, as talebearers tell, thence on to her  
last-taken breath  
Was unseen, save as wraith that in front  
of the brass made moan ;  
So that ever the way of her life and the  
time of her death  
Remained unknown.

And hence, as indited above, you may  
read even now  
The quaint church-text, with the date of  
her death left bare,  
In the aged Estminster aisle, where folk  
yet bow  
Themselves in prayer.

*October 30, 1907.*

## THE MARBLE-STREETED TOWN

I REACH the marble-streeted town,  
Whose "Sound" outbreathes its air  
Of sharp sea-salts ;  
I see the movement up and down  
As when she was there.  
Ships of all countries come and go,  
The bandsmen boom in the sun  
A throbbing waltz ;  
The schoolgirls laugh along the Hoe  
As when she was one.

I move away as the music rolls :  
The place seems not to mind  
That she—of old  
The brightest of its native souls—  
Left it behind !  
Over this green aforesdays she  
On light treads went and came,  
Yea, times untold ;  
Yet none here knows her history—  
Has heard her name.

PLYMOUTH (1914?).

## A WOMAN DRIVING

HOW she held up the horses' heads,  
Firm-lipped, with steady rein,  
Down that grim steep the coastguard treads,  
Till all was safe again !

With form erect and keen contour  
She passed against the sea,  
And, dipping into the chine's obscure,  
Was seen no more by me.

To others she appeared anew  
At times of dusky light,  
But always, so they told, withdrew  
From close and curious sight.

Some said her silent wheels would roll  
Rutless on softest loam,  
And even that her steeds' footfall  
Sank not upon the foam.

Where drives she now? It may be where  
No mortal horses are,  
But in a chariot of the air  
Towards some radiant star.

## A WOMAN'S TRUST

IF he should live a thousand years  
He'd find it not again  
That scorn of him by men  
Could less disturb a woman's trust  
In him as a steadfast star which must  
Rise scathless from the nether spheres  
If he should live a thousand years  
He'd find it not again.

She waited like a little child,  
Unchilled by damps of doubt,  
While from her eyes looked out  
A confidence sublime as Spring's  
When stressed by Winter's loiterings.  
Thus, howsoever the wicked wiled,  
She waited like a little child  
Unchilled by damps of doubt.

Through cruel years and crueller  
Thus she believed in him  
And his aurore, so dim ;

That, after fenweeds, flowers would blow ;  
And above all things did she show  
Her faith in his good faith with her ;  
Through cruel years and crueller  
Thus she believed in him !

## BEST TIMES

WE went a day's excursion to the  
stream,  
Basked by the bank, and bent to the ripple-  
gleam,  
And I did not know  
That life would show,  
However it might flower, no finer glow.

I walked in the Sunday sunshine by the  
road  
That wound towards the wicket of your  
abode,  
And I did not think  
That life would shrink  
To nothing ere it shed a rosier pink. ~

Unlooked for I arrived on a rainy night,  
And you hailed me at the door by the  
swaying light,  
And I full forgot  
That life might not  
Again be touching that ecstatic height.

And that calm eve when you walked up  
the stair,  
After a gaiety prolonged and rare,  
    No thought soever  
    That you might never  
Walk down again, struck me as I stood  
there.

Rewritten from an old draft.

## THE CASUAL ACQUAINTANCE

WHILE he was here in breath and  
bone,  
To speak to and to see,  
Would I had known—more clearly known—  
What that man did for me

When the wind scraped a minor lay,  
And the spent west from white  
To gray turned tiredly, and from gray  
To broadest bands of night!

But I saw not, and he saw not  
What shining life-tides flowed  
To me-ward from his casual jot  
Of service on that road.

He would have said : “ 'Twas nothing new;  
We all do what we can;  
'Twas only what one man would do  
For any other man.”

Now that I gauge his goodliness  
He's slipped from human eyes ;  
And when he passed there's none can guess,  
Or point out where he lies.

## INTRA SEPULCHRUM

WHAT curious things we said,  
What curious things we did  
Up there in the world we walked till dead  
Our kith and kin amid !

How we played at love,  
And its wildness, weakness, woe ;  
Yes, played thereat far more than enough  
As it turned out, I trow !

Played at believing in gods  
And observing the ordinances,  
I for your sake in impossible codes  
Right ready to acquiesce.

Thinking our lives unique,  
Quite quainter than usual kinds,  
We held that we could not abide a week  
The tether of typic minds.

—Yet people who day by day  
Pass by and look at us  
From over the wall in a casual way  
Are of this unconscious.

And feel, if anything,  
That none can be buried here  
Removed from commonest fashioning,  
Or lending note to a bier :

No twain who in heart-heaves proved  
Themselves at all adept,  
Who more than many laughed and loved,  
Who more than many wept,

Or were as sprites or elves  
Into blind matter hurled,  
Or ever could have been to themselves  
The centre of the world.

## THE WHITEWASHED WALL

WHY does she turn in that shy soft way  
Whenever she stirs the fire,  
And kiss to the chimney-corner wall,  
As if entranced to admire  
Its whitewashed bareness more than the  
sight  
Of a rose in richest green ?  
I have known her long, but this raptured  
rite  
I never before have seen.

—Well, once when her son cast his shadow  
there,  
A friend took a pencil and drew him  
Upon that flame-lit wall. And the lines  
Had a lifelike semblance to him.  
And there long stayed his familiar look ;  
But one day, ere she knew,  
The whitener came to cleanse the nook,  
And covered the face from view.

“Yes,” he said : “My brush goes on with  
a rush,

And the draught is buried under ;  
When you have to whiten old cots and  
brighten,

What else can you do, I wonder ?”  
But she knows he’s there. And when she  
yearns

For him, deep in the labouring night,  
She sees him as close at hand, and turns  
To him under his sheet of white.

## JUST THE SAME

I SAT. It all was past ;  
Hope never would hail again ;  
Fair days had ceased at a blast,  
The world was a darkened den.

The beauty and dream were gone,  
And the halo in which I had hied  
So gaily gallantly on  
Had suffered blot and died !

I went forth, heedless whither,  
In a cloud too black for name :  
—People frisked hither and thither ;  
The world was just the same.

## THE LAST TIME

THE kiss had been given and taken,  
And gathered to many past :  
It never could reawaken ;  
But you heard none say : " It's the  
last ! "

The clock showed the hour and the minute,  
But you did not turn and look :  
You read no finis in it,  
As at closing of a book.

But you read it all too rightly  
When, at a time anon,  
A figure lay stretched out whitely,  
And you stood looking thereon.

## THE SEVEN TIMES

THE dark was thick. A boy he seemed  
at that time  
Who trotted by me with uncertain air ;  
"I'll tell my tale," he murmured, "for I  
fancy  
A friend goes there? . . ."

Then thus he told. "I reached—'twas for  
the first time—  
A dwelling. Life was clogged in me  
with care ;  
I thought not I should meet an eyesome  
maiden,  
But found one there.

"I entered on the precincts for the second  
time—  
'Twas an adventure fit and fresh and  
fair—  
I slackened in my footsteps at the porchway,  
And found her there.

“ I rose and travelled thither for the third time,  
The hope-hues growing gayer and yet gayer  
As I hastened round the boscage of the outskirts,  
And found her there.

“ I journeyed to the place again the fourth time  
(The best and rarest visit of the rare,  
As it seemed to me, engrossed about these goings),  
And found her there.

“ When I bent me to my pilgrimage the fifth time  
(Soft-thinking as I journeyed I would dare  
A certain word at token of good auspice),  
I found her there.

“ That landscape did I traverse for the sixth time,  
And dreamed on what we purposed to prepare;  
I reached a tryst before my journey's end came,  
And found her there.

“I went again — long after — aye, the  
seventh time;

The look of things was sinister and bare  
As I caught no customed signal, heard no  
voice call,

Nor found her there.

“And now I gad the globe — day, night,  
and any time,

To light upon her hiding unaware,  
And, maybe, I shall nigh me to some  
nymph-niche,  
And find her there ! ”

“But how,” said I, “has your so little life-  
time

Given roomage for such loving, loss,  
despair?

A boy so young ! ” Forthwith I turned  
my lantern  
Upon him there.

His head was white. His small form, fine  
aforetime,

Was shrunken with old age and battering  
wear,

An eighty-years long plodder saw I pacing  
Beside me there.

## THE SUN'S LAST LOOK ON THE COUNTRY GIRL

(M. H.)

THE sun threw down a radiant spot  
On the face in the winding-sheet—  
The face it had lit when a babe's in its cot ;  
And the sun knew not, and the face knew  
not  
That soon they would no more meet.

Now that the grave has shut its door,  
And lets not in one ray,  
Do they wonder that they meet no more—  
That face and its beaming visitor—  
That met so many a day ?

•  
*December 1915.*

## IN A LONDON FLAT

1

"YOU look like a widower," she said  
Through the folding-doors with a  
laugh from the bed,  
As he sat by the fire in the outer room,  
Reading late on a night of gloom,  
And a cab-hack's wheeze, and the clap of  
its feet  
In its breathless pace on the smooth wet  
street,  
Were all that came to them now and  
then. . . .  
"You really do!" she quizzed again.

II

And the Spirits behind the curtains heard,  
And also laughed, amused at her word,  
And at her light-hearted view of him.  
"Let's get him made so—just for a whim!"

Said the Phantom Ironic. "'Twould serve  
her right  
If we coaxed the Will to do it some night."  
"O pray not!" pleaded the younger one,  
The Sprite of the Pities. "She said it  
in fun!"

## III

But so it befell, whatever the cause,  
That what she had called him he next  
year was;  
And on such a night, when she lay else-  
where,  
He, watched by those Phantoms, again  
sat there,  
And gazed, as if gazing on far faint shores,  
At the empty bed through the folding-doors  
As he remembered her words; and wept  
That she had forgotten them where she  
slept.

## DRAWING DETAILS IN AN OLD CHURCH

I HEAR the bell-rope sawing,  
And the oil-less axle grind,  
As I sit alone here drawing  
What some Gothic brain designed ;  
And I catch the toll that follows  
From the lagging bell,  
Ere it spreads to hills and hollows  
Where the parish people dwell.

I ask not whom it tolls for,  
Incurious who he be ;  
So, some morrow, when those knolls for  
One unguessed, sound out for me,  
A stranger, loitering under  
In nave or choir,  
May think, too, " Whose, I wonder ? " \*  
But care not to inquire.

## RAKE-HELL MUSES

YES ; since she knows not need,  
Nor walks in blindness,  
I may without unkindness  
A true thing tell :

Which would be truth, indeed,  
Though worse in speaking,  
Were her poor footsteps seeking  
A pauper's cell.

I judge, then, better far  
She now have sorrow,  
Than gladness that to-morrow  
Might know its knell.—

It may be men there are  
Could make of union  
A lifelong sweet communion—  
A passioned spell ;

But *I*, to save her name  
 And bring salvation  
 By altar-affirmation  
 And bridal bell ;

*I*, by whose rash unshame  
 These tears come to her :—  
 My faith would more undo her  
 Than my farewell !

Chained to me, year by year  
 My moody madness  
 Would wither her old gladness  
 Like famine fell.

She'll take the ill that's near,  
 And bear the blaming.  
 'Twill pass. Full soon her shaming  
 They'll cease to yell.

Our unborn, first her moan,  
 Will grow her guerdon,  
 Until from blot and burden  
 A joyance swell ;

In that therein she'll own  
 My good part wholly,  
 My evil staining solely  
 My own vile yell.

Of the disgrace, may be  
 "He shunned to share it,  
 Being false," they'll say. I'll bear it;  
 Time will dispel

The calumny, and prove  
 This much about me,  
 That she lives best without me  
 Who would live well.

That, this once, not self-love  
 But good intention  
 Pleads that against convention  
 We two rebel.

For, is one moonlight dance,  
 One midnight passion,  
 A rock whereon to fashion  
 Life's citadel ?

Prove they their power to prance  
 Life's miles together  
 From upper slope to nether  
 Who trip an ell ?

—Years hence, or now apace,  
 May tongues be calling  
 News of my further falling  
 Sinward pell-mell :

Then this great good will grace  
Our lives' division,  
She's saved from more misprision  
Though I plumb hell.

## THE COLOUR

*(The following lines are partly made up, partly remembered from a Wessex folk-rhyme)*

“ **W**HAT shall I bring you ?  
Please will white do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through ? ”  
“ —White is for weddings,  
Weddings, weddings,  
White is for weddings,  
And that won’t do.”

“ What shall I bring you ?  
Please will red do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through ? ”  
“ —Red is for soldiers,  
Soldiers, soldiers,  
Red is for soldiers,  
And that won’t do.”

“ What shall I bring you ?  
Please will blue do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through ? ”  
“ —Blue is for sailors,  
Sailors, sailors,  
Blue is for sailors,  
And that won’t do.

“ What shall I bring you ?  
Please will green do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through ? ”  
“ —Green is for mayings,  
Mayings, mayings,  
Green is for mayings,  
And that won’t do.”

“ What shall I bring you  
Then ? Will black do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through ? ”  
“ —Black is for mourning,  
Mourning, mourning,  
Black is for mourning,  
And black will do.”

## MURMURS IN THE GLOOM

(NOCTURNE)

I WAYFARED at the nadir of the sun  
Where populations meet, though seen  
of none ;  
And millions seemed to sigh around  
As though their haunts were nigh  
around,  
And unknown throngs to cry around  
Of things late done.

“O Seers, who well might high ensample  
show”

(Came throbbing past in plainsong small  
and slow),

“Leaders who lead us aimlessly,  
Teachers who train us shamelessly,  
Why let ye smoulder flamelessly  
The truths ye trow ?

“Ye scribes, that urge the old medicament,  
Whose fusty vials have long dried im-  
potent,

Why prop ye meretricious things,  
Denounce the sane as vicious things,  
And call outworn factitious things  
Expedient?

“O Dynasties that sway and shake us so,  
Why rank your magnanimities so low  
That grace can smooth no waters yet,  
But breathing threats and slaughters  
yet  
Ye grieve Earth’s sons and daughters  
yet  
As long ago?

“Live there no heedful ones of searching  
sight,  
Whose accents might be oracles that smite  
To hinder those who frowardly  
Conduct us, and untowardly;  
To lead the nations vawardly  
From gloom to light?”

*September 22, 1899.*

4.

## EPITAPH

I NEVER cared for Life: Life cared  
for me,  
And hence I owed it some fidelity.  
It now says, "Cease; at length thou hast  
learnt to grind  
Sufficient toll for an unwilling mind,  
And I dismiss thee—not without regard  
That thou didst ask no ill-advised reward,  
Nor sought in me much more than thou  
couldst find."

## AN ANCIENT TO ANCIENTS

WHERE once we danced, where once  
we sang,  
Gentlemen,  
The floors are sunken, cobwebs hang,  
And cracks creep; worms have fed upon  
The doors. Yea, sprightlier times were then  
Than now, with harps and tabrets gone,  
Gentlemen!

Where once we rowed, where once we  
sailed,  
Gentlemen,  
And damsels took the tiller, veiled  
Against too strong a stare (God wot  
Their fancy, then or anywhen!)  
Upon that shore we are clean forgot,  
Gentlemen!

We have lost somewhat, afar and near,  
Gentlemen,  
The thinning of our ranks each year  
Affords a hint we are nigh undone,  
That we shall not be ever again  
The marked of many, loved of one,  
Gentlemen.

In dance the polka hit our wish,  
Gentlemen,  
The paced quadrille, the spry schottische,  
"Sir Roger."—And in opera spheres  
The "Girl" (the famed "Bohemian"),  
And "Trovatore," held the ears,  
Gentlemen.

This season's paintings do not please,  
Gentlemen,  
Like Etty, Mulready, Maclise;  
Throbbing romance has waned and  
waned;  
No wizard wields the witching pen  
Of Bulwer, Scott, Dumas, and Sand,  
Gentlemen.

The bower we shrined to Tennyson,  
Gentlemen,  
Is roof-wrecked; damps there drip upon  
Sagged seats, the creeper-nails are rust,  
The spider is sole denizen;  
Even she who read those rhymes is dust,  
Gentlemen!

We who met sunrise sanguine-souled,  
Gentlemen,  
Are wearing weary. We are old;

These younger press ; we feel our rout  
 Is imminent to Aides' den,—  
 That evening's shades are stretching out, .  
 Gentlemen !

And yet, though ours be failing frames,  
 Gentlemen,  
 So were some others' history names,  
 Who trode their track light-limbed and fast  
 As these youth, and not alien  
 From enterprise, to their long last,  
 Gentlemen.

Sophocles, Plato, Socrates,  
 Gentlemen,  
 Pythagoras, Thucydides,  
 Herodotus, and Homer,—yea,  
 Clement, Augustin, Origen,  
 Burnt brightlier towards their setting-day,  
 Gentlemen.

And ye, red-lipped and smooth-browed ;  
 list,  
 Gentlemen ;  
 Much is there waits you we have missed ;  
 Much lore we leave you worth the knowing,  
 Much, much has lain outside our ken :  
 Nay, rush not : time serves : we are going,  
 Gentlemen.

AFTER READING PSALMS  
XXXIX., XL., ETC.

SIMPLE was I and was young;  
Kept no gallant tryst, I;  
Even from good words held my tongue,  
*Quoniam Tu fecisti!*

Through my youth I stirred me not,  
High adventure missed I,  
Left the shining shrines unsought;  
Yet—*me deduxisti!*

At my start by Helicon  
Love-lore little wist I,  
Worldly less; but footed on;  
*Why? Me suscepisti!*

When I failed at fervid rhymes,  
“Shall,” I said, “persist I?”  
“*Dies*” (I would add at times)  
“*Meos posuisti!*”

So I have fared through many suns ;  
    Sadly little grist I  
Bring my mill, or any one's,  
    *Domine, Tu scisti !*

And at dead of night I call :  
    " Though to prophets list I,  
Which hath understood at all ?  
    Yea : *Quem elegisti ?*"

## SURVIEW

“Cogitavi vias meas”

A CRY from the green-grained sticks of  
the fire

Made me gaze where it seemed to be:  
'Twas my own voice talking therefrom to  
me

On how I had walked when my sun was  
higher—

My heart in its arrogance.

“ *You held not to whatsoever was true,*”

Said my own voice talking to me :

“ *Whatsoever was just you were slack to  
see;*”

*Kept not things lovely and pure in view,*”

Said my own voice talking to me.

“ *You slighted her that endureth all,*”

Said my own voice talking to me ;

“ *Vaunteth not, trusteth hopefully;*”

*That suffereth long and is kind withal,*”

Said my own voice talking to me.

*“ You taught not that which you set about,”*  
Said my own voice talking to me;  
*“ That the greatest of things is Charity. . . .”*  
—And the sticks burnt low, and the fire  
went out,  
And my voice ceased talking to me.

THE END





